

No. 7

THE ISSUE IN BETWEEN

THALIA



THALIA

Founders & Creative Direction

Amelia and Julia Haney

Editor of Creative Writing & Poetry

Julia Haney

Editor of Arts & Design

Amelia Haney

Illustration

Morgane Richer La Flèche

Subscribe

Thalia is published quarterly,
to subscribe visit
thaliamagazine.com

Cover

Eleanor Louise Butt in Porthmeor Studio 5
photographed by Alban Roinard

Pages 50-63

contact@thaliamagazine.com

The Issue In between

“So many of us experience, or live in, the state of being in between” says our interviewee, KL Pereira.

We are all somewhere in between lodged between places, identities, expectations. Sometimes we get stuck in the between, sometimes we welcome the opportunities it provides, often we cannot tell the difference.

This issue is an ode to the wobbly between, a celebration of liminality. The contributors featured discuss finding the middle ground between perfectionism and desire for mess, between ideation and creation, between mediums.

As we enter a new year, we hope that this issue will be part bookend, part springboard.



C e l e b r a t i n g

Emily Van Kley

Margo Wolowiec

Brittney Corrigan

Alice Irwin

Cyn Vargas

Eleanor Louise Butt

Jacqueline Young

KL Pereira

Samantha Passaniti

Sarah Lederman

Tania Alvarez

Joan Kane

Emily Van Kley

Lacustrine

I.

The pain that comes with thaw
metallic, a struck tuning fork

in the blood's lull. Thumbprints
mooned in cold-waxed

skin. Whatever the body
seems to understand,

here it has been shamefully fooled,
having allowed sensation

to seep out unremarked
past two sets of socks,

past the boots' felt linings
& cast rubber soles,

having drawn up the frozen
lake's perilous breath like praise—

while offering no protest,
nothing at all, until in the warm

car, under the hands' earnest
chafings, a blotched pink

returns. Only then, deliverance
all but assured, do the nerves

assemble their factory
of grind & ache.

II.

On the frozen lake, take
your turn with the auger.
Score through the plane
of the caught world to one
still animate below. Fish
are wary. The hours do not

have names. Ice cataracts
each cut place & nothing
moves until one walleye
flaps up slow & stiff
as barely-worked leather
on a bobbed line.

III.

Lakes freeze but do not die,
like the goldfish one winter

vacation we left & turned
the heat so low the pipes froze,

the tap froze, the aquarium
became a brick of cliffed

& reaching ice. Our pets
terrible sculptures of themselves,

orange scales undimmed,
eyes caught bored-open

in the midst of their daily
ministrations, black suckerfish

printed like apostrophes
to the tank's sides. Furnace

called back to life, we watched
the ice begin to sweat,

watched it feather
back, hang branched &

skeletal in returning water.
We expected the fish

to upend & float
like bath toys, to lump

the slushed surface, instincts
decommissioned, hearts

unspurred. Instead they
unperished. Budged

their gills. Cupped tails
one way & the other

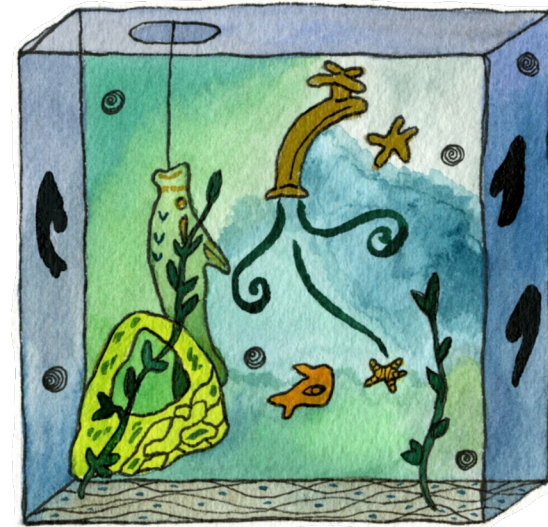
until no worse for the wear
they swam up past fern

& dayglo arch to kiss the edge
of their universe, credulity

intact, no reason to doubt
the heavens would open

& food begin to fall.

First published in Crab Orchard Review



“I belong in the snow.”

Writing is practice that has a much stronger hold on me than I do on it. Sitting at my desk each day is part compulsion, part spiritual desperation, part celebration, part technical study. I love the way poetry and other creative work has to excavate underneath the artifice we use to interact in daily life, while also using artifice in terms of craft choices to amplify what the work is communicating. I often struggle with whether making poems has any real use in a world where crushing injustice is the norm and

I feel (and am) implicated in so much of it. But I also know that I feel least stuck and most aware of complexity, including the varied forms hope can take, when I'm interacting with art that's vulnerable, searching, and personal. So I keep trying to make that kind of work. And when the going gets particularly tough, I literally join the circus (I'm also an aerial acrobatics teacher and performer) which reminds me to live in my body, take risks, and get weird.

What are you in the midst of right now?

An existential crisis, a load of laundry, training a new puppy, trying to learn self-acceptance, 100% chance of rain, a literal circus, a novel?, a city/state/nation built on broken treaties, a desire to do better, the fruits of my labor—a very mixed bag.

Do you ever feel caught between?

I grew up a pastor's daughter in rural, working-class Upper Michigan—living as a queer writer and aerial artist in the comparatively urban Pacific Northwest, I guess I sometimes feel caught between, split in my loyalties. There's so much to love about a place where hetero- (among other forms of) normativities are less enforced, where progressive organizations have (at least some of) the resources they deserve, where young people have access to supportive arts communities. But, I also love the allergy to grandeur and self-delusion I was raised with, the resilience in the face of extreme weather and economic conditions, the need to show up for your neighbors when you're on no one else's map. Of course both places have their problems, and are only specks in the whole wide world—which means *caught* is more feeling than reality.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

I need solitude: a quiet house, a room with a door I can close, headphones in a public place. Different days call

for different solitudes. Alone at home feels different than alone with others, and both have their advantages. At the same time I need to be in community with other writers, particularly by reading their work—the vast differences in style and subject matter of the poems that move me are a reminder to cast my own net wide. I also need lots of snacks and special drinks to bribe myself to stay at the table when the work gets dull or difficult. (Like the aforementioned puppy, I am highly motivated by food.)

Where do you belong?

I belong in the snow more than any other weather. I belong with my partner of fifteen years in our shambled backyard. I belong anonymous in new cities. I belong at the edge of what I can't yet understand.

What is next?

My second poetry collection, *Dear Skull*, is in the editing process, and will be forthcoming from Persea Books. This manuscript is an exploration of personal and collective griefs, and I'm so excited/fraught/hopeful for it to make its way out into the world. I am also thrilled to be collaborating with my friend Marlo Winter and a group of local circus artists here in Olympia on an aerial/storytelling show that will explore the vulnerabilities of the creative process. The show (as yet untitled) will be presented in a limited tour of the Northwest this spring.

Emily Van Kley

Waste Recovery

She drives 2 hours to visit and can't stop yawning
while I've walked a mile in the rain's velveteen,
my dress adherent, boots deepening their brown—
working on my portfolio for being professionally glum.

Everything is more consequential than my expression
curtailed when I'm alone in the trees, the cracked
violin my voice plays to the book's cover,
the pillowcase, back of hand.

The world is always sacrificing someone
misapprehended, systemically harmless. Despite
how little I matter, I am not excused. The rain toggles
from mist to maelstrom and we are so quenched already.

At times a person may go on a talk show to claim, in no
uncertain terms, that she is not a murderer. Still any one
of us at the department store in search of a stupid
pack of t-shirts ends up with blood on our hands.

Who don't I love, at least a little? But what a vapor.
I bought this card with a photo of cats in aviator glasses,
and signed it, *love*. I called myself to the call
to action, collected signatures, but so slowly.

Why be a person? Fraught figurine + appetite.
Universalist malfeasant. Sometimes my lungs
lose their place, keep prising out when
they mean in. There I go, making an emergency

out of anything autonomic. I'm sorry
to be on your side—clearly you deserve someone
more solvent. Less taffeta, more ardor. Ok but kiss
me anyhow; give me something to mistrust harder.

First published in Gulf Coast

For one, they were terribly
beautiful. Their gold skin

the color of celebrity eyelids
overlaid with plangent blue-green

and daubed red to match
the half-masks they wore

below their eyes—gestural
fine-art lizards, *ornate day geckos*

even science was obliged
to name them. Soft around the legs

and midsections, not a species
enamored of the appearance

of starvation, they preferred
to *lick soft, sweet fruit, pollen &*

nectar. We can't yet bring ourselves
to discuss how they perished,

only to say that they gleamed
marching into that capsule

& of those sent up—the mice,
the flies, the fungus—only

the geckos were equal
to the dark jewel of space.

Emily Van Kley

**It Is Still Too Early to Talk
About The Geckos' Cause of Death**

—*Institute of Biomedical Problems, Russia 2014*



Margo Wolowiec

“Detroit feels like my conceptual home base.”

Though we perceive them as paintings, my works are in fact intricate loom-woven textiles infused with images via dye-sublimation transfer. My process begins with the careful collection of digital images sourced from social media platforms. I use my own algorithms to build a vast image archive culled from trending geotags and hashtags. My most recent series “Storm Systems” is constructed from amalgamations of forecast graphics and texts related to recent catastrophic storms and their aftermath. They draw a line between the reality of climate change and the broader implications for

our society. Of late, I have been reflecting on water contamination and water quality—a major issue in Detroit. Images of droplets of water and cloud-filled skies are complicated during the weaving process, accumulating tech-failure traits like a faulty satellite TV image. The resulting works move between passages of legibility and pure abstraction.

Other productive frictions include: beauty versus politics, information versus knowledge, word versus picture, and the colliding histories of painting, photography, textiles and sculpture.







What are you in the midst of right now?

I'm currently spending most of my time working on a large 35-foot-wide weaving that will bring me into the new year. Working large-scale requires planning my production schedule pretty far in advance. For the next few months I get to just put my head down and work. This is also perfect timing for the cold months ahead. I'm looking forward to some intensive studio time and hibernating a little.

Do you ever feel caught between?

Sometimes I feel caught between various expectations of being an artist, especially a fiber based artist. One small example that happens all the time - when visitors come into my studio they often seem surprised that I keep a minimal, tidy work space - there aren't any chaotic piles of yarn or spontaneous fiber messes. Instead, my work tables are clean and things are neatly put away. I work best in an organized, sparse environment. There are a lot of unhelpful stereotypes and romanticizations out there as to who artists are and what our lives look like. We aren't always scattered, unpredictable and mysterious. Inspiration doesn't usually strike instantly. It takes a lot of work to maintain a studio practice, and truthfully the work can be monotonous and dull, especially when it comes to things like keeping finances in order and managing day to day tasks.

There are also challenges to identifying as a woman in a world that is still dom-

inated by men. While I can't speak for all women, it is common to feel that we don't have the same amount of leeway as our male counterparts, and we've been conditioned to feel like we won't have a second chance when we fail.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

I keep a steady daily routine in my studio, so it's important for me to carve out days where I can let my mind wander. Living in Michigan, I am surrounded by nature, so my favorite thing to do is get outside and go for a long walk, canoe, or sail on the lakes. These times can be super generative for me. Other times, a quiet day at home alone is all I need.

Where do you belong?

I feel like I belong right where I am. I've moved around a lot, lived in Chicago, San Francisco, New York, but never really felt settled. I recently moved back to Detroit not far from where I grew up. Detroit feels like my conceptual home base and I'm lucky to be surrounded by family and friends that I love - that's more than enough for me.

What is next?

I'm working on some new steel-framed freestanding weavings that I'm really excited about! Other than that, and some long-term projects, I'm taking things as they come.



Brittney Corrigan

My high school expository writing teacher introduced me to a quote by Henry James that I have carried with me closely in the decades since: “Be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!” Sometimes this advice instructs me to be observant: find the extraordinary in the ordinary of the everyday; notice the smallest details, or beauties, or uglinesses from which we might usually turn away. Other times, it feels like an invitation to stand in someone else’s shoes, to practice empathy.

My recently completed manuscript, *Daughters*, which is different entirely from the confessional and narrative poems I wrote in the two decades prior, is a series of persona poems in the voices of imagined daughters of various characters from fairy tales, folklore, mythology, and popular culture. These voices became vehicles to talk about experiences not necessarily my own and bring them to light:

homelessness, domestic violence, alcoholism, and other manifestations of injustice and loss.

Lately, there is an increased urgency for me to James’ command. News stories about melting polar ice caps, record temperatures, extreme wildfire seasons, hurricanes, and the forecasted earthquake that could change the face of the Pacific coastline where I live sometimes overwhelm me with their immensity and reach. I have always turned to my writing to process difficult emotions and situations, so my new project is an exploration of and commentary on our current Anthropocene age. Our species is struggling not only to get along but also to come to terms with our impact on the planet. As I think about the world I am raising my children into, it feels important to me to use my art to elucidate, comment on, and incite action to combat climate change and move the global conversation forward.

What are you in the midst of right now?

For many years now I have been immersed in several worlds at once. My day job is as an events manager at a college, working with faculty to bring a variety of speakers and performers to campus. I’m raising a 12-year old girl and 16-year old boy while tending a 22-year marriage. I’m currently writing both poetry and short story collections responding to the urgent and catastrophic events of our Anthropocene age. And I’m about to be in the midst of publishing my third collection of poems, due out in fall 2021.

Do you ever feel caught between?

All the time! Between work and home. Between community and solitude. Between nostalgia and contentment. Between husband and kids. Between poetry and fiction. Between paralysis and choice. But there is a certain richness in standing at the center of more than one obligation, project, personal relationship, or emotional pull.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

Ideally, solitude and silence. I’ve had the gift of writing residencies the past couple years, and I wrote more in those stretches than during the rest of the year. But my preferred conditions are not essential – otherwise I would only be creative for a handful of days each year. With a full time job and family obligations, I’ve become accustomed to flipping the creative switch whenever I have a spare moment – my lunch hour, a rare free evening, or composing lines in my head while running or walking the dogs. For me, the key is observation. I keep an ongoing list of ideas, news stories, strange facts, and images that strike me as muse-worthy, and I use them as tinder. I also benefit from a hard deadline, so regular meetings of

my poetry and fiction critique groups keep me on track.

Where do you belong?

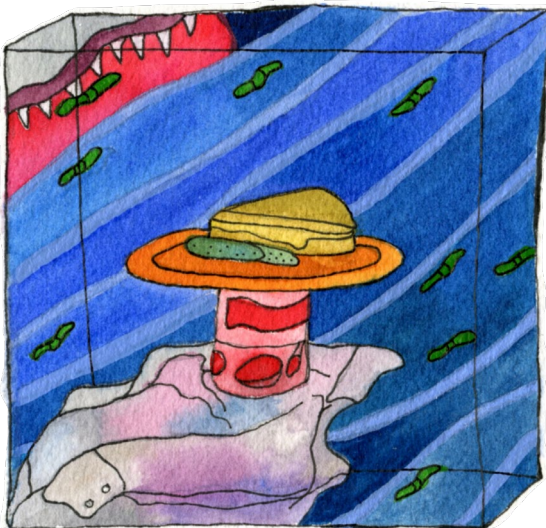
I feel most at peace in particular landscapes, usually tied to a transformative experience in that place. Manzanita, on the Oregon coast, where I return again and again. Summer Lake, Oregon and Mineral, Washington, where I had writing residencies that enriched my work and my sense of self. The mountains of Colorado, overlooking the city where I grew up. My home of Portland, Oregon, where I’ve lived for nearly 30 years. I also feel like I belong among the people who are dear to me – family, extended family, friends, and colleagues. And I feel a strong sense of belonging when I am among other writers, especially poets. A shared love of language, craft, image, emotion, and social responsibility when talking with other writers makes me feel worthy, and seen.

What is next?

Personally, next is learning to raise teenagers into young adults and rediscovering what marriage is about once the kids become independent human beings. Next is revisiting fiction, which I hadn’t written since I was a teenager myself, and listening to how my stories are in conversation with my poems. Fiction and poetry are like siblings vying for my attention – the confident older sister and the new baby. Next is learning to love and give myself to them both. Next is celebrating that my poetry collection, *Daughters*, a series of persona poems I labored over for five years, has found a home with a wonderful publisher and will soon be making its way into the wider world. Next is the project of writing about climate change and our Anthropocene age, wrestling with my own place in this tumultuous world.

Brittney Corrigan

Alien Abductee's Daughter



My mother isn't a sci-fi-movie-
1960s-housewife-drying-her-hands-
on-her-apron-as-she-half-sleepwalks-
into-the-yard-where-there-is-a-bright-
beam-waiting-to-levitate-her-through-
the-whipping-wind kind of gal.

She makes grilled cheese sandwiches
sensibly, with butter on both sides,
and pickles, and tomato soup. She
reads novels of literary merit, maybe
a little magical realism thrown in,
but not enough to make her moony.

She believes in ghosts, it's true, the same
way she believes in mathematics:
the beauty of theories and formulations,
the attempt to enumerate all things—
black holes, gravity, planetary orbits
and tides, weather, dark matter, energy.

What I'm saying is, I believe her.
If she lost time, it likely was because
of the UFO. I mean, she's not an
invents-bedtime-stories kind of mom.
There's nothing impossible about it.
It all comes down to simple math.

Listen, my father's not really my father.
That's what I'm trying to tell you. When
he's gone, we know exactly where
he goes. You can smell it on his clothes,
sour and sloppy. My mother was returned
only slightly disheveled, and carrying me.

See? My skin has a shimmery gray undertone.
Just look at my whopping green eyes. We don't
need my father anymore. They're coming back
for us, I can feel it. That's why my mother stands
in the yard every night, crying, holding my hand.
We're certain. We know the lights will come.

It's too sharp among
the grief of the living,
but I love to watch
my father care for
the dead. In the quiet
rooms, the dead glow

with the last of their
leaving. I like to read
to my father while
he works. Maybe it
eases the crossing,
or maybe it keeps

the dead tethered here.
Don't we all want to
know what happens
next? The chapter
in which my father
makes the incision,

inserts the trocar,
begins the drain. The
dead listen to *once*,
to *then*, to *ever after*
as my father dresses
and cossets their

luminous remains.
And for the ones
whose bodies my
father turns to ash,
I like to read of
ships on high seas

or flying machines
riding the sky, so
they know that as
they sift into their
vessels, anyplace is
a place they could go.

Brittney Corrigan

Mortician's Daughter

“There is a certain
richness in standing at the
center of more than one
obligation, project,
personal relationship, or
emotional
pull.”

Brittney Corrigan

Whale Fall

The ocean's innumerable tiny mouths
await the muffled impact like baby birds.
Sediment clouds up at the deadened

settling, and the flesh is set upon. How
the weight of loss can be beautiful
in its opening. Luminous worms undulate

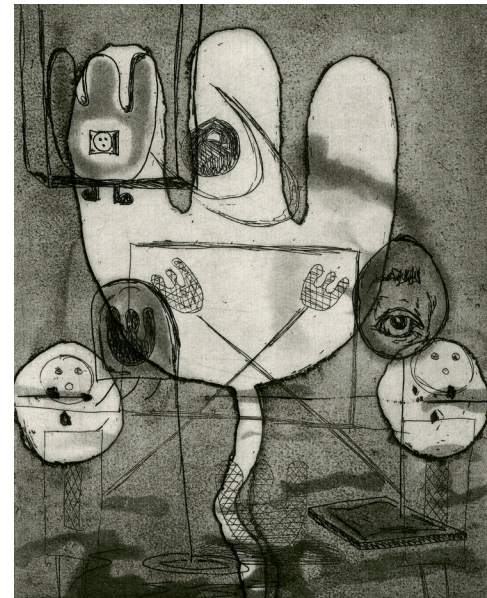
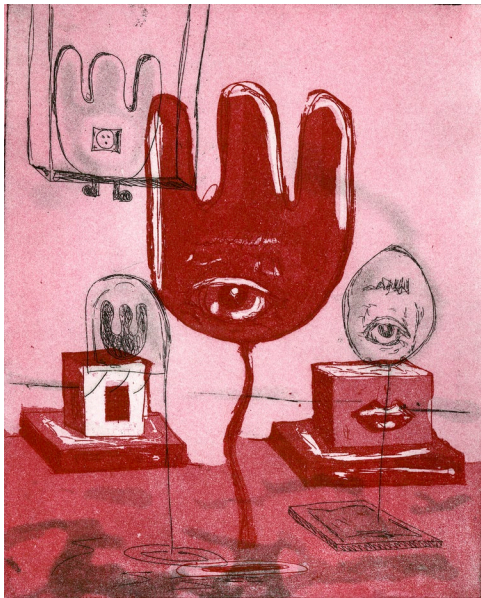
like party streamers as isopods
and lobsters arrive to feast. This body
holds an ecosystem unto itself: species

found nowhere else but here, cleaved
to the sunken remains. Sleeper sharks
move in slow and gentle, ease

the messy carcass to gleaming bones.
And then, how the skeletal rafters
of grief fuzz and bloom. How sometimes

the coldest depths allow for such measured
undoing. All the while hungry lives
swarm and spread, come to stay.

Limpets attach to the unhidden core. Sorrow
in its abundance crushes, cycles, feeds.
How the body rests, rich in what sustains.



Alice Irwin

“It’s good to be different.”

The playground is an important space and an integral theme in my practice. I look at different memories, social skills, and psychological traumas felt at these sites of activity and social interaction. I want some aspects of my work to be playful, naïve and comical, whilst I want others to be thought-provoking.

The work offers sensual contrasts: parts feel tactile whilst others create kinetic experiences in the mind. There are visual contrasts, designed to stimulate different kinds of memory, and there are recurring motifs that may take different forms and generate different emotions. For example, the three-fingered motif may appear as a balloon or something darker. Another simple form, the robotic figure, references the human condition as well as modern technology. I reference the theme of snakes and ladders in my work and the ladder is becoming a strong structural element in many of my

larger works, both print and sculpture. The ladder suggests positivity, and elements of it, certainly its ‘feet’, symbolically reference human beings. The snake is referenced in the figures, which in turn refer to jigsaw puzzles, another structural element in my work.

I explore the potential of print, concealing and revealing through layering and drawing to imitate a game of hide and seek. I like to use old techniques with a modern feel, whilst exploring digital advances.

I graduated from the RCA in 2018. Recently, I won the 2018 East London Printmakers award among others. I have exhibited at Flowers Gallery, London; Sid Motion Gallery, London; CGP, London; and East of Elsewhere in Berlin. My most recent solo show at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park was visited by over 1,700 people in its week-long exhibit.







Thalia Issue No. 7

What are you in the midst of right now?

Right now I'm very busy. I have a large solo show opening in February at The Piece Hall in Halifax called People Play. I am creating a large sculptural piece that will appear in their courtyard and some related prints around the history of the hall for an exhibition inside. I am also collaborating on a fashion collection for cyclists, which we are hoping to launch in the spring.

Do you ever feel caught between?

I do sometimes get caught in my thoughts. I am always thinking of new projects and ideas and how to move them forward, so I guess I do feel caught up sometimes.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

I don't really have a certain routine. I have things I do but they change from week to week. I try to keep my process playful, balancing this with the serious-

ness I feel about my work. At the heart of my creative process are drawings, which I have pinned to the walls of my studio. They are sitting, waiting. They may be used for prints, sculptures and design. They are essential to my creative process. I start most days on my bike and have a number of friends whom I train with in the mornings. Then I will go to the studio and start my day; sometimes how I planned to spend my time changes.

Where do you belong?

I feel like a bit of an outsider because my work doesn't fit in with any particular group – it's different – and it's good to be different.

What is next?

At the moment, most of my energies are with the Piece Hall project, which I am very excited about. Also, of course, the cyclewear. And I already have ideas about work next year.

“I belong where I stand my ground.”

When asked why I write, I often talk about the first story I ever wrote. It was about a dog who was in love with a frog and the frog was so not having it. At six years old, I wrote about love and loss and that's where my love of the not-happy ending rooted itself. I've been told my stories are sad, bittersweet. I don't write happy endings. The only bows I use are on presents and even then, I usually forget them. There is a certain need for the human soul to feel like everything will be okay, that we are okay, but that doesn't mean perfect or neatly wrapped endings. Many of us want to see a character go through tribulations, suffer, experience the pain and sorrow we ourselves may have experienced, and then witness

them rise. We see the narrator's strength revealed and explored throughout their journey and leave the story with a sense of hope, and a sense that their story continues beyond the last page.

Regardless of genre, regardless of whether the story takes place on Earth, or the moon, or a planet that we never heard of, regardless of whether the characters are human, or alien, or animals, a true story at its core connects and engages with its audience, invites them inside, and leaves an impression of hope and longing. I work hard to do that for my readers. I hope I have done that for them. That's why I write.

What are you in the midst of right now?

I'm in the midst of finishing my second book, which is a novel about Ixchel, a 14-year-old Mayan American girl living in Chicago in the mid '80s. I'm so close to finishing the first draft. It's like I'm in a fog where I can't clearly see the ending, but there's no turning back nor staying put. I have to write myself into clarity even if it means stumbling and fumbling around in the clouds until I do.

Do you ever feel caught between?

Always. I'm caught between my many roles—mother, writer, wife, friend, teacher, employee. There's never enough time to fully surrender to one role because they all need some attention. It's a constant shifting of hats. A constant reminder to pay attention to the one tugging at my sleeve for attention. A constant question whether I am doing enough in any role. A constant need to step back and take a few minutes to just be in my own space. It's not bad to be caught in between. It's a matter of constantly shifting the formula so it works and taking the time, even for a few seconds, between the shifts to appreciate the mainspring of life.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

When I worked on my short story collection at home, my dog, Olivia, was on my lap or next to me throughout the entire process. She has since

passed, but that need to have one of my fur babies in the room remains. My new dog, Ellie, now hangs out with me when I'm working on the novel. I also need total silence except for Philip Glass' *Metamorphosis* playing in the background along with a lit scented candle, an array of colorful Post-It Notes in arm's reach, and 3-4 uninterrupted hours.

Where do you belong?

I belong wherever I feel safe and welcomed. Comfortable. I also belong in places that don't want me—a woman of color, a Latina, who society has said should have no voice in certain (many) areas of life. I belong where I stand my ground. Where I use my art to give voice to those that don't have one, or feel like can't use theirs. I belong next to my fellow strong women, my mentors, my friends. I belong in the room full of outdated thinking with straight white men who think I'm the cleaning lady, or don't notice or acknowledge me. I belong in a place where I am supported and lifted by others. I belong where I pay it forward. A sense of belonging starts within. Belong there and then you can take that sense of belonging with you everywhere.

What is next?

Definitely finishing and publishing the novel. The novel is my only literary “next”, despite the fear that it will be read, which then is also accompanied by the fear that it won't.

And There It Was

When I was little my parents argued more often. I think it was because Dad wanted another baby and Mom didn't. I had heard stories of Mom being pregnant with me when I sat on some nerve in her back and it hurt her to move and walk and sometimes she didn't even get any sleep at all.

"You were planned, Ixchel. We wanted you," Mom said again as I was sick in bed. A wet towel on my forehead while she rubbed Vapor Rub on the bottoms of my feet then immediately covered them with socks. She always said this to me when I was really sick. When I was little I didn't really know what she was trying to say, but as I got older, I realized she meant I wasn't an accident or even a pleasant surprise. Somehow this made me feel special and yet a lot of pressure at the same time.

An empty bottle of medicine sat nearby. I watched Mom throw it out, wiping her hands on the front of her jeans. "Don't open the door to anyone. I'll be back in fifteen minutes," she said and kissed my forehead making a face like when a match burns too low. "Cherry, right?" She said forgetting that all kids' medicine tasted the same – gross.

I should have stayed in bed, but she had told me again about how her and Dad wanted me. Just me. So, I headed for the closet in their room where they kept the black hard suitcase like the ones used in bank robberies in the movies. You know, with the shiny metal clasps? I knew Mom kept the important stuff in there like the stamp sheets from Jewel where she could trade them in once she had enough for a new set of encyclopedias. She said she wanted me to be smarter than her. Books she didn't have growing up would be mine. One gallon of milk at a time.

Everything that I ever needed to know about my parents was in that suitcase. They were more than just sheets of paper. They were what said they owned the house we lived in. They were what said she and Dad were American citizens. They were what said I was theirs. They were the photographs of *back home* that showed my Great Abuela Rosa in front of the smallest house I had ever seen like it belonged to the munchkins in the Wizard of Oz. So, when I heard Dad ask Mom – *How are you feeling today? Are you ok? Do you want to talk about it?* though it was a Tuesday just like any other Tuesday, I didn't know what he was so worried about and I didn't ask. My throat was shredded inside with barbwire and I knew they wouldn't tell me anyway. Parents have a way of hiding things they don't want their kids to know only to fuel their curiosity. Hence, why I went to the closet with a 103 fever leaving Vapor Rub footprints that seeped through my Looney Toons socks on the hardwood floor.

The suitcase was hidden in the corner of their bedroom closet. And by hidden I mean it was under an old blanket that used to be mine when I was a

baby. The **A B C** in bold colorful letters imprisoned by what was once white and now dirty-gray stitched squares. I slid the suitcase just outside the closet, sat on the floor and opened it. There were all the papers in various manila folders. Photographs I had seen before in sandwich bags. I lifted each piece up as quickly as I could, but not too fast because I had already moved the suitcase, I didn't want to shift the documents so much that Mom could tell. There was nothing new. Not that I knew what I was looking for to begin with, but still I didn't find whatever it was I was hoping to.

I checked the flap on the side before I decided that I was cutting it too close and there I saw a small envelope. In the light it looked like faded leather, felt like it too, soft and wrinkled, the corners folded like the neighbor's new hotdog puppy that barked all the time. The envelope only held one thing – a picture of a baby in a white lace dress and an oversized white matching bonnet in a casket. There was no one else in it. The picture was taken pretty close and I could see all of it – the reddish brown of the wood; the flash off the gloss like a bright yellow star. I stared at the baby's face though I didn't want to. It had its eyes closed, but like a baby doll whose eyes open when you pick it up. And really that's what it looked like a doll, but not one anyone would ever want for Christmas. This one was skinny, and its lips floated above its face. I couldn't tell if it was a boy or a girl. Or why it was dead. Or why Mom had a picture of it hidden in her special suitcase that contained all the papers in it that made her who she was.

On the back of the photo scrawled in blue ink was 1974. Two years before I was born. I heard the car pull up in the driveway. The rocks always made this noise like the popcorn on the stove. I rushed to put everything back. Making sure the baby picture wasn't bent in the envelope and put it again in the side pocket. I snapped the suitcase shut, pushed down on the clasps till the clicks echoed throughout the room, and put it back in the corner of the closet, covering it with my old baby quilt. If it was actually mine.

I got into bed just as Mom opened the front door and called out to me. I acted like I was asleep when she came upstairs and didn't move when she checked my temperature the way she always did – with her hand first and then her lips on my forehead. She lifted my head and told me to take some medicine. It was bitter and stung as I swallowed. I wasn't sure if it was cherry, but I didn't want to open my eyes and look at the box. Didn't want to look at Mom.

As I drifted off, she said, "My poor baby," as she ran her fingers through my hair, carefully removing the strands that were sticking to my face. I fell asleep thinking of the baby in the casket. The poor baby in the casket.





Eleanor Louise Butt

Working in loose, gestural abstraction, my painting practice is process driven. Through colour, texture, lines and forms, I combine surfaces and gestural energy, adopting the potentialities of paint to create surfaces where action, experience, perception and memory are interwoven and folded back into one another.

The surface of each painting becomes a charged space through my use of coarse linen, raw canvas and hessian, and it is often saturated with an iconic yellow hue. What then follows is an intuitive process of applying and removing paint, pouring, rubbing and layering. My canvases become diaristic sites to pose questions and receive answers.

I am based in Melbourne, Australia,

and have just returned home from a 7-week tenancy at Porthmeor Studio 5 in St Ives, Cornwall, UK. The aim of my time at Porthmeor Studios was to expand my practice through research and immersive studio time, in order to make ambitious large-scale pieces. I have returned with over 60 new works. The studios are a short walk to Tate St Ives and the Barbara Hepworth Museum, which I visited often during breaks from painting. Walking helps me think and develop ideas outside of the studio, and I spent many afternoons hiking the Cornish moors and cliffs, which were awash in warm browns as the bracken died off for winter. Browns have always been integral to my paintings, and in this new body of work they have become even stronger as a result of this influence.









What are you in the midst of right now?

I'm currently unpacking the paintings, drawings and reference materials from my time at Porthmeor Studios. Sorting through the works I can see new directions that I will pursue, and pieces that will inspire entire bodies of work—my practice will be sustained by these new works for quite some time. Once I've sorted through them all I will have an idea of which pieces I will keep for forthcoming exhibitions, and which may need further development.

Do you ever feel caught between?

Yes. I'd like to get into my studio 5-6 days a week and although this is not always possible, the longing for that creative space becomes stored energy which, if all things go to plan, erupts once I get in there. To sustain myself on the days away, and to keep trains of thought connected, I find it helpful to keep a sketchbook, pencils and travel-size watercolour set handy to scribble down painting ideas and thoughts.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

Routine is essential for me. I get into the studio in the morning and start the day with a cup of tea, a flick through some art books, and look over what I've done the preceding day(s). Music's vital too (I have a background as an underground club and radio

DJ). When painting, I listen broadly to psych, punk, jazz, classical, library, folk, house, hip-hop, soul, rock, club, experimental, electronic, etc. I like to stop and take a walk during the day. I live an hour out of the city in a small town surrounded by cool-temperate rainforest. The mid-afternoon light in my studio is especially great. My studio looks out over a valley and up onto the mountain ridge—in spring this outlook is thick with yellow wattle (mimosa) blooms. I generally put my brushes down by 5pm, having a finish time helps me to focus during the day.

Where do you belong?

I feel a sense of belonging in my studio, in nature, having meals and conversations with friends, visiting galleries, hanging around in the garden with my dog, and reading a good book on a comfortable chair, to name just a few.

What is next?

I am working towards exhibitions in 2020 & 2021. My next show is at c3 Contemporary Art Space in Melbourne, Australia. I have a lot of paintings to stretch—in the UK I worked on the canvas/linen pinned directly to the wall so that I could easily roll them up to transport home. I aim to exhibit overseas more regularly in the coming years, so I will be dedicating time to make that happen.



“In spring this outlook is thick with yellow wattle (mimosa) blooms.”



“I suppose the next
thing I should do is
find a good place to sit
and write.”

Home is where I find a particular kind of peace, where I am able to sink safely into a space that is mine and mine alone. It is also a place where I am confronted with all the aspects of myself that I'm too afraid of or unwilling to deal with, and distract myself from doing

so with the busy day-to-day. My poems locate themselves in quiet spaces or simple objects in my home. These objects/spaces carry the weight of all that fear and reconcile themselves in the painful and merciless process of writing.

What are you in the midst of right now?

I'm not quite sure. But I've always had a hard time identifying where I am or what I'm doing when I'm mired in the thick of it. I'll get back to you when I'm out.

Do you ever feel caught between?

Always. Most often between what I want and what I need. Sometimes they agree, but usually they don't. I think writing is my way of managing this uncomfortable space.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

A nice place to sit. During undergrad, I found this great ruddy brown recliner on the sidewalk outside of my

apartment. I could sit in that thing it all night and write. I placed it by the window in between a bookshelf and a record player. I was in it so often that my roommates felt the need to ask if they could sit in it too. I didn't take it with me after I graduated, however, which was my biggest mistake. I haven't found as good a writing chair since.

Where do you belong?

Apparently in that recliner.

What is next?

I just moved into a new apartment a few months ago and am still settling in. I suppose the next thing I should do is find a good place to sit and write.

Forget the pent
heft of epidermis

as if in breath
limbs ready
to lift

this charnel house
from decay

If something is heavy

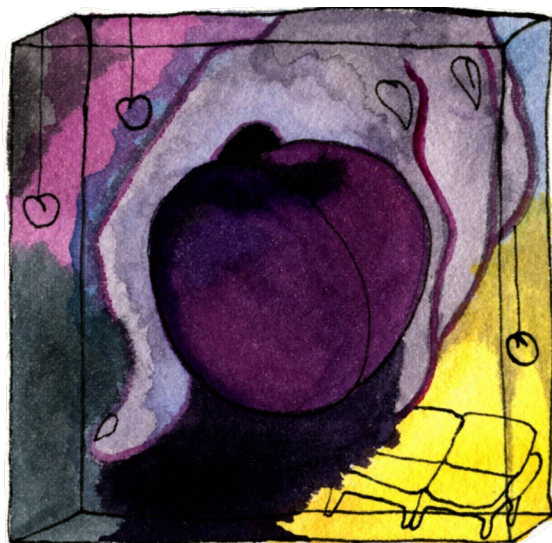
use your legs
they say

Jacqueline Young

About Watching a Body Dance

Jacqueline Young

Some, Round



With wet
palms
you trade a plum

for a kiss

which I
not knowing
what to do

hold on

The point is, the why
hurts
too much

but this couch
is a good mediator

carrying my weight
the body
says things

I am sad
I am sad

and this couch
with its wooly arms
says

shhh

*First published in
Jacqueline's chapbook,
The Distance Formula
from Finishing Line Press*

Jacqueline Young

Sofa-stry

An interview with

K L P e r e i r a

Interview and photos by Julia Haney



KL Pereira is a writer, a teacher, a librarian, and a self-described weirdo. She mines all things creepy, dark, and paranormal for her stories, which incorporate aspects of magical realism, prose poetry, fairytales, and ghost stories. But KL pushes her reader to go beyond the ghost, beyond the sensationalized story, to find the historical nuance and the voices that are lost in the stories we tell.

I meet KL at the Boston Athenæum, one of Boston's oldest private libraries ("the fairyland of libraries"), where she works in the Cataloguing department. After we speak, she shows me her favorite section, the witchcraft section.

We sit outside on the sunny, chilly patio overlooking one of Boston's oldest cemeteries, the Granary Burying Ground. Paul Revere and some signers of the Declaration of Independence are buried here, as is Samuel Sewall, a judge in Salem in 1692 who convicted individuals of witchcraft. He is the sole judge to ask for forgiveness for his involvement.

The bells ring throughout our time together, looking over Boston, on what KL calls "the doorstep of winter".

JH: First off, you have a wide range of interests and you're working on a lot—can you tell me what you're focused on right now and how you're sourcing stories?

I've been teaching at GrubStreet since 2006. I work at this library. I write. Oh, and I'm in library school! The writing has always been a part of me. I have stories and books from when I could barely write. If you are a storyteller, if you are a writer, it's always been there. You've always been doing it and you always will—you just apply it in different ways.

How do you make time to facilitate the creative process?

I schedule time, and that's the reality of any kind of art—you have to sit in the chair. You have to grab the moments. Alice Munro famously said she is a short story writer because she never had time to write more than a short story. If you're passionate about it you'll make the time, even if it's just 5 minutes to scribble something down, which is what I do. I'm very analogue. I handwrite a lot of my drafts.

Tell me more!

There is something physical in the connection between your brain and your hand. I can just let my brain go soft, just roam. When I'm sitting at a computer, that's when I'm editing, trying to be as sharp as possible, trying to solve the puzzle. Before I want to solve the puzzle, I need to lay all the pieces on the floor, assess what's there, find what fits and what doesn't. I take pieces of paper and move them around on the walls (which F. Scott Fitzgerald used to do too!).

I heard you speak at the Athenæum in September about your book, which has been so much fun to read. Can you tell me a little more about your background, how you began to write, and how you define yourself as a writer?

I am a short fiction writer but I come from a poetry background, so all my prose is poetic. When I teach creative writing, I always tell my fiction writers that they need to also be poets. They need to focus on the written word in a way that is allied with the written word, and

doesn't forget the music of language. When I write a story, I am always thinking about it being read aloud, about it being experienced (like a song). I come from a long line of storytellers, so I grew up always wondering, Ok, how do I tell this story so that people will listen to it? Cadence and music is part of that. So, I call my work prose but it is closely allied with poetry. And some of the flash fiction could really be prose poems. I play with it a lot.

And then you can pick aspects from different areas: intentionally of word choice from poetry, for example...

Exactly. I recently finished a poetry manuscript, sold a few of the poems, and then I wondered what would happen if I turned these 70 poems into flash stories. I'm in the process of doing that, centered on a certain character, and then telling the story of that character 70 times. I'm interested in what happens and how the form will change. Will it explode?

I live in Salem and I'm interested in the stories and voices of people who have been accused of something, who have been called a witch and maligned. When I worked at retail stores in Salem, tourists would come in asking, "Where is the cemetery where the witches were buried?" It is almost willful misunderstanding of what happened. The original 19 people who were murdered, did not identify as witches. They were not given Christian burials. There is no cemetery where they are buried. That cognitive dissonance enraged me. And then on the other hand, in Salem there are a lot of people

who identify with witchcraft.

I'm exploring the different meanings of the word witch. We also have the night witches—who were a soviet all-female air force in World War II. Hitler called them witches because they were so difficult to fight. They were amazing. They used crop duster planes, which were silent because they had almost no metal, no left to them. Three of them would go out at a time and drop bombs on German planes.

I've found myself yearning for more voices, yearning to learn more about people on both sides—those who are maligned and those who take power from the term witch.

This reminds me of something I wanted to ask you about—you spoke in your talk here (and you explore in your book) the idea that sites of tragedy can turn into sites for tourism and entertainment. Do you think there is a way to harness interest in tragedy (wherever it stems from) as a tool for deeper understanding or are the concepts at odds?

This is very hard and we are all complicit in it. I want to be careful to not place myself on the outside, because I'm not. I love Halloween. I love dark, creepy stuff. But, I try to go into those spaces thinking critically. And I understand where the divide is. Some people just want to get drunk and have fun on Halloween and they come to Salem because its wild and cheesy and fun! That's great. The part that bothers me is not acknowledging historical context and all the people who are forgotten.

I grew up very close to Lizzie Borden's house in South Eastern Massachusetts and I was always fascinated with her. She was the first woman to be indicted for murder in the US. She was acquitted. She was rumored to be a lesbian. And to this day, no one knows who murdered her father and stepmother.

On my book tour, I did an event at her house (where I had previously had some paranormal experiences). That night I stayed in her parents' bedroom. People had come from all over the country to stay up all night, do ghost hunts, and have a séance. Fall River is a mill town—but this what it's known for. It's a way to draw people in, make money, and talk about what happened. But we don't always step back and say, let's use this story to talk about poverty or domestic violence. For some people, it's just a ghost story and it's not that real.

In your stories, you write from many perspectives. And at times it can be confusing if a character is dreaming, if they're alive, dead, what tense we are in...

Yes, it's very liminal! That is important to me—the state of being in between. So many of us experience, or live in, the state of being in between. We don't really belong to one thing or another. Or we feel that we don't. That is why ghosts are interesting to everyone—neither fully alive nor fully dead. I'm looking for what we can't quite explain. What are the feelings and experiences that we just don't even have words for?

And how do you know when you've written something that has achieved that?

When you've found your way to the in-between state? After reading a story, do you want your reader to think, for example, "this person is both dead and alive"?

I think part of it is knowing that it's undefined. I know what I hope to achieve, but then I need other people to be sounding boards.

And yes. I want my reader to be able to interpret the story in a way that is personal to them, to know that I haven't given them a concrete answer. One of the stories in my book is called "Not Quite Taken". I wrote it as a meditation on a character who popped into my head one day when I was walking to the train. The character is doomed to die over and over. A writer who I respect recently said to me, "Your story made me sob. I've never read a story about the survival of abuse that was more visceral." That is an incredible interpretation of the story. It is not the place I wrote it from, but that is the power of writing characters that are interpretative. Each reader can bring what they need to bring to the story. And hopefully they can take what they need to take too.

That is what I love about these stories. You provide the signposting, but I know from the beginning that I'm not expected to crack a code.

I just saw this incredible photography exhibit at the Peabody Essex Museum. It's the first retrospective of Olivia Parker. She set up a tableau with objects that she photographs. And she says, "I don't want you to worry about what it means. I want you to think about how it makes you feel and what you take away from it." I really appreciated





that because we worry so often with art, what does it mean? We are taught that we must instinctively engage in the process of breaking something apart. That very intellectualized process really can kill the joy of art.

Right, and if you can't read your own experience into it, then you can't connect with it, then you don't want to know more.

Exactly. Every single piece of writing has an audience, and it's not ever going to be everyone for any piece. But hopefully, you can find a piece that you connect with, something that stays with you. That's why fairytales are so special and why we hold on to them. Fairytales are flat in a certain way. And that flatness enables us to build our own faces on the characters and fill in the details that we need to in order to identify with the story. What do you need the story to be? That is what keeps us telling stories.

Joan Didion said, "We tell ourselves stories in order to live." We also tell ourselves stories in order to survive. You don't choose to be an artist, you are compelled to it. And it's not a stable life. Usually it's not even something that can monetarily sustain you. But it is soul sustaining. For me, creating is my way to make some sense of the world.

You write a lot about dying, dreaming, memory, fusion between future and past. Do you have any general relationships between these concepts that are pervasive in your writing?

Oh, that's an interesting question. I think dying and dreaming and memory are all caught in the idea

that we live our lives and experiences over and over and over. We live them when we're awake, asleep, alive, dead, in different bodies and consciousness. There is a cyclical nature to all of this that connects us.

And that creates the in between.

Yes, because we are always in that in between space.

You have images that you return to, like the cat on the chest or the ghost—do you feel like Halloween contributes to or distracts from these images and ideas you're already thinking about?

I try not to be proprietary about Halloween! I've always loved Halloween. It's my dad's birthday. Before living in Salem, I felt starved for weirdos. But Salem is 24/7 year-round weirdos. Halloween is when the others who crave that in their lives come around.

How did you celebrate?

I have a tradition where the other folks I live with: we sit on the porch, hand out candy, ask about everyone's costumes, we dress up and observe. For me, Halloween is the last day of the year. It is when I reflect on past months, where I am and where I want to be. For me, Halloween is the doorstep of winter. I'm about to go into hibernation mode. What do I want to leave here at this doorstep and what do I want to take with me?





Sarah Lederman

Drawings from fractured narratives sprawl across the surface of my paintings. The imagery varies: memories of places, people, and moments, a palm tree from Los Angeles, a couple engaged in an intimate moment as one spits into the other's mouth. At other times I appropriate images taken from illustrations and art history: medieval manuscripts, a picture from a children's book. The images can be grotesque hybrids of animals as well as bodies engulfed in sexual pleasure, both erotic and repellent. Although the starting point for my work is often drawings and ideas, the paint will eventually take over. The figurative elements become less important and the negative space starts to take priority.

The canvases act as intermediate space between body and mind: within them they hold evidence of past trauma like scar tissue. I often work with rabbit skin glue as a primer, which is then layered with paint and pencil. Then I rub off the paint to reveal traces of

what has gone before. It is impossible to fully remove the previous disturbances, yet I still attempt to dissolve and distill them through this process.

The painting is treated like a body, not neat, pretty, and contained—it leaks, bleeds, and excretes. Paint is messy, uncontrollable, and fluid. An accumulation of dirt, paint, and oil builds up to create the surface of the painting, which resembles a kind of skin. The drawings become etched in the canvas like tattoos hovering just below the surface.

The canvas has a memory, which I try, and fail, to erase. Sometimes rather than removing, I attempt to mask it with more layers of pigmented glue. The extra layers act like scabs on the canvas. The pigmented glue rushes like platelets to heal a wound—but the damage has already been done and, like veins beneath the skin, the viewer can still see the residue.



“There is nothing like
having a crush on a city.”

What are you in the midst of right now?

This time last year I was in Los Angeles during the wild fires. It was such a surreal experience; the sky was a thick smoky pink and there was ash falling from the sky like snow. It was beautiful but very sad. There was such an awareness around the city that the smoke was, in part, caused by people's homes burning. I had just had my heart broken and was in a dark place. I found myself making loads of drawings during this time, which were combinations of memories from my relationship and the fiery sky. For a long time I didn't know what to do with these drawings, but recently I have started to use elements from them in the paintings I am currently working on.

Do you ever feel caught between?

Four years ago, I went to Los Angeles and fell in love with the city. There is nothing like having a crush on a city. I loved the light, the big blue sky, and the sense of opportunity. For a long time I had a fantasy about moving there and tried to go back as much as I could. I felt caught between living in LA and London. I love London because my friends and family are here

(and you really don't need to drive). For a while, I made a lot of paintings about that longing to be in LA. It is only recently I have realised that I am happy to stay in London. It's a wonderful place that has loads to offer, except sunshine, of course.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

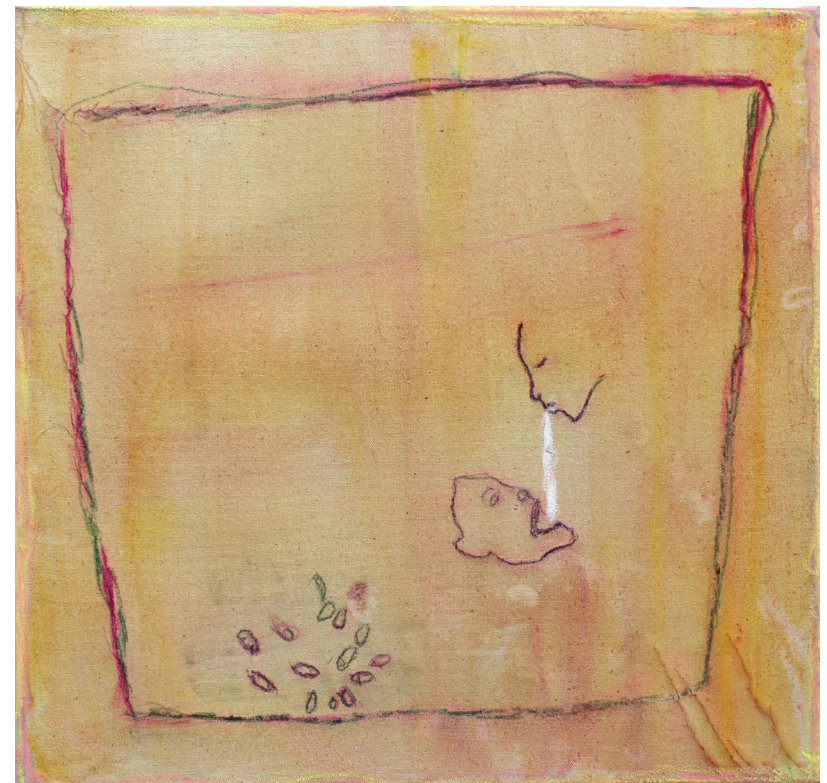
Firstly, milk in the fridge so I can make a builders cuppa. These cups of tea are for the moments when I don't know what to do next with a painting—making and drinking tea allows me to relax. Secondly, the right art materials. I am such a materials geek and high quality materials are really important to me. Thirdly, a great podcast or the radio to listen to while I work.

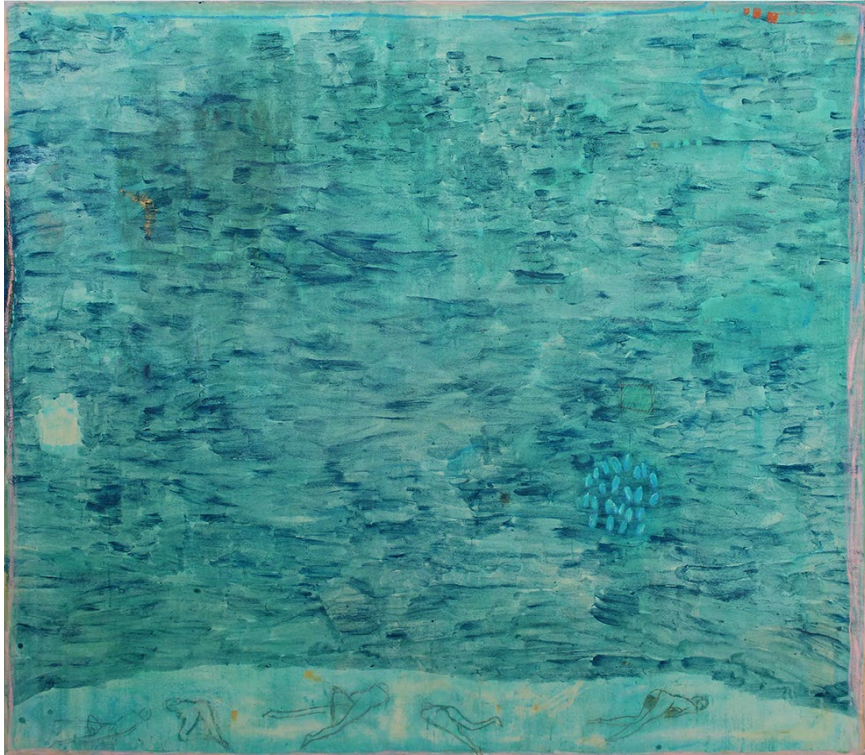
Where do you belong?

I think I belong in the studio covered in paint or sitting in the sunshine by the sea drinking old fashions.

What is next?

I never really know what I am going to make until I make it. So I guess you will just have to wait and see.







“I need air, trees,
sea, open and
natural spaces to breathe.”

Samantha Passaniti



If I had to define all my research with one word, everything could be enclosed in the verb “to walk”, like the title of the thoughts collection by Henry David Thoreau written during his long solitary excursions in nature.

It is in walking in natural places that my mind generates images, ideas or creative processes that make the invisible, intangible and fleeting emotions, sensations and moments, artworks. It is in the act of walking that I gather elements from the landscape as if I wanted to keep that particular moment of life with me forever to make it eternal.

Each step of my life there is a corresponding work, like a travel diary of images, sculptures, and installations. My artworks are made with materials that I pick up during

walks (lands, minerals, leaves, branches, spices, plants, waxes, salt, etc.). The value of the material becomes linked to the place in which I collected it and to my experience with it afterwards.

I could also consider my works to be time-specific. They can be traced back to a certain existential experience. It is as if what happens inside me is revised in nature around me and vice versa.

The whole creative process of my research takes place according to a natural and spontaneous flow, exactly as it happens in natural cycles. I try not to force anything through rationality. I simply listen by trying to satisfy what the world wants to tell me and what I want to say to the world through natural materials.

What are you in the midst of right now?

I think that all of us as human beings are always in between choices. The artist's process is like being continuously at a crossroads. And life is like artistic creation, continuously in the midst of confusion, looking for a way, the right way, in the midst of millions of possible ways.

Do you ever feel caught between?

Yes, for sure. My research is focused on the dialogue and exchange between inside and outside, between intimate world and environment, between soul and nature, between existential experience and natural cycles. I always feel trapped between two or more elements. I think it's part of everyday life, and part of being an artist. But when I devote myself totally to my work, and maybe only at that moment, I feel really whole, focused on what I really want to be. In that moment the time stops and there is nothing else, only my idea and the materials that I use to realize it.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

First of all, I need time, a lot of time to think, read, meditate, imagine, live and feel. Then I need air, trees, sea,

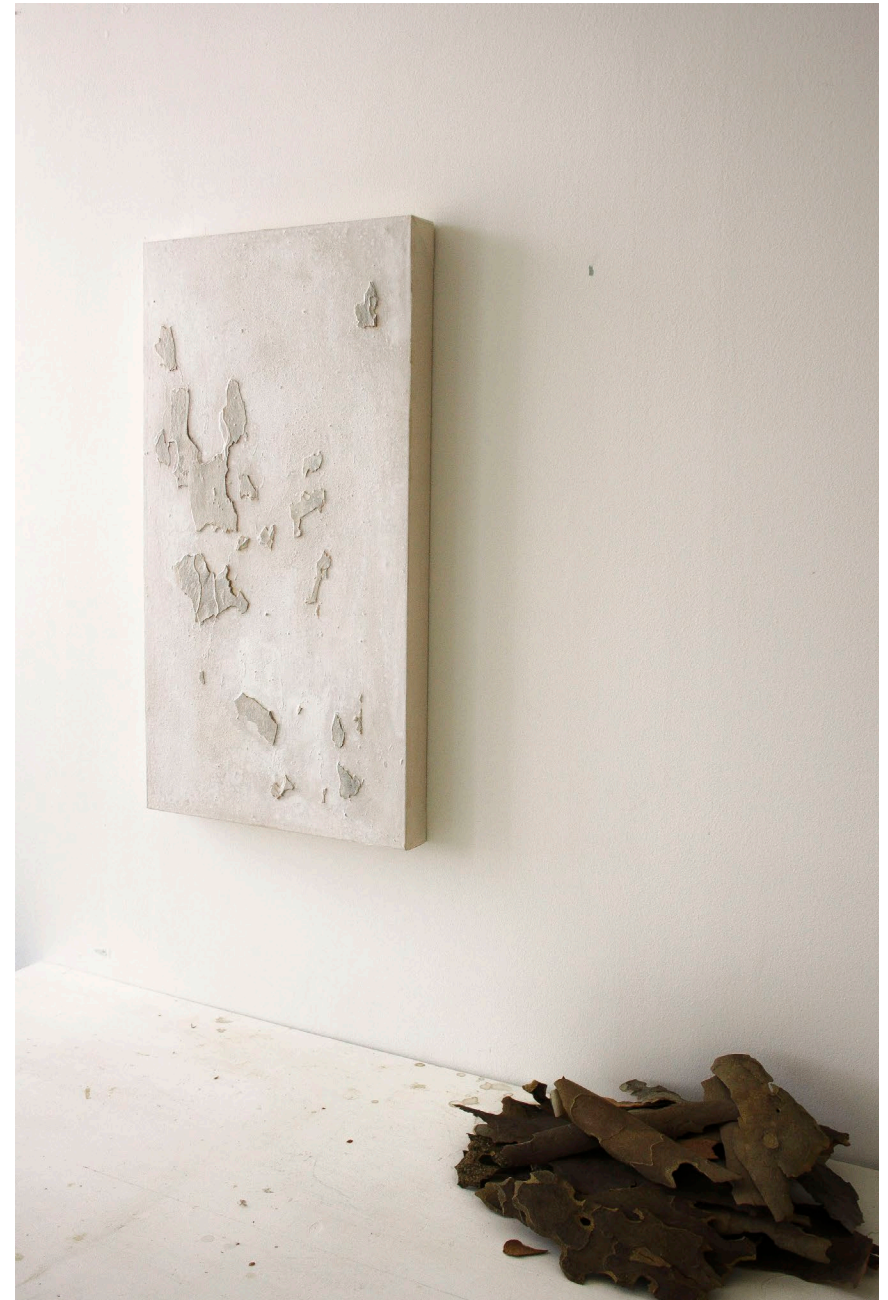
open and natural spaces to breathe, to dream and to collect the materials that belong to me. And finally, I need my studio, my silence, my intimate space where I feel completely at home and where ideas and materials become artworks.

Where do you belong?

I live in a small village on the sea of Tuscany in Italy but I feel I belong to all the natural world just like all other living things. I belong to the universe that hosts us and that I try to respect and celebrate with my work. I belong to the natural cycles and laws that govern the world with harmony. I belong to that part of people who live with respect and kindness towards everything and everyone without making noise, without forcing anything.

What is next?

For 2020 I already have some projects to implement. I will participate in two artistic residencies: one will be ten days in a natural park in Liguria (Italy) and the other is in Andalusia, Spain in a center for contemporary art called Arteventura. I am very happy to have these two experiences in which I can deepen my work focused on nature.





Tania Alvarez

“I belong in my studio
and in New York City.”

I'm based in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, working in a studio frequently cluttered with containers of acrylic paints, bins filled with crayons, color pencils, and textiles. A clunky rolling tool chest overflows with tools and materials I've hoarded throughout the years. I'm drawn to textural work and constantly seek new methods of mark-making as well as ways to incorporate drawing, painting, and sewing into my pieces. Some of the artists who have influenced my work are David Hockney, Robert Rauschenberg, Frida Kahlo, William Kentridge, Catherine Murphy, and Antonio Lopez Garcia.

My subjects are often the spaces in which I spend large portions of my time. Medical settings and sinks are recurring themes, and themes that I choose to transform through invented color, altered perspective and omitted people and objects. I like to think of the spaces I paint as magnified versions of my reality. In all my pieces, I hope to elicit a sense of tension and instability. I want to transport the viewer to that place and moment where they can see things through my perspective. It is in the creation of this work where I feel I can regain control in an environment primarily controlled by others.





What are you in the midst of right now?

I've been working on a new series of paintings based on memories and dreams. The work is inspired by the experiences I've had managing a chronic illness over the past few years. I tend to have several ideas I want to work on, so I typically have multiple paintings in progress on the wall. I need variety and a varied approach when making my work to satisfy my different interests.

Do you ever feel caught between?

Yes, currently I find myself caught between the part of me that leans towards rendering the hell out of an image and the other that is more interested in the process, material, and mark-making. I'm beginning to find a balance within the perfectionist side of myself and the part that wants to make a mess and enjoy the process. There is something magical that happens when I allow myself to explore and remember what something looks like or how it feels, rather than copying it exactly.

What is essential to your creative process (routine, good light, a B.L.T.)?

Oh, good question. Aside from caffeine and a bag of popcorn, I think the best thing I've done for myself is to rent a studio space with a window and natural light. The other aspect that has

been crucial to my process, strangely enough, has been commuting to my studio. For a while, I was working with-in walking distance from my apartment and soon realized the excuses I would make to stay home, or how easy it was to call it quits early in the day. Having a distance between home and work has been essential. I assign my time for work and the commute enables me to get into a different frame of mind that is necessary for me to create.

Where do you belong?

In terms of location, I think that immigrating to the States at a very early age with my family made it difficult to choose a place I feel like I belong. I also traveled a lot and lived abroad in my early 20s, which didn't help the feelings of displacement once I returned to the States. The only place I've ever truly felt like I belong is in my studio and in New York City.

What is next?

As of today, I don't have any plans. I am a 'fly by the seat of your pants' kind of person. I hope to make a strong body of work in the New Year and my only plan is to submit to a few residencies and shows I've had my eye on. My biggest goal is to let go and make the best, most truthful work I can, without falling victim to the pressure and fear I have before.

“I am in the midst of starting over.”

Inupiaq with family from King Island (Ugiuvak) and Mary's Igloo, Alaska, I am the author of seven books and chapbooks of poetry and prose, most recently *Another Bright Departure* (CutBank 2019). I am the 2019-2020 Hilles Bush Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and in 2018 was the first indigenous recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in Poetry. I am on the faculty of the low-residency MFA program in creative writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico and raise my children as a single mother in Cambridge.

Forces of history define me as a person as well as an artist and teacher: I'm Inupiaq. My grandfather, a marine mammal hunter, spoke no English and participated in the cash economy only through turning to ivory carving after our

village of Ugiuvak on King Island was depopulated in 1959. King Islanders—some coerced by the United States government, others electively—abandoned our ancestral home for a seemingly safer, easier and more pragmatic life on the Alaskan mainland. As an enrolled member of the King Island Native Community, my teaching, writing and life experience have been formed by my mother's recollection of displacement and disruption of the traditional subsistence lifestyle our ancestors had maintained for generations, and her resulting insistence on teaching me and my children our Inupiaq language and history. As an artist, a desire to understand how my family's indigenous identity can find context and expression motivates me to write and teach while maintaining a strong relationship to place and past.

What are you in the midst of?

I am in the midst of starting over, moving on, looking for constants. I am on a flight between Iceland and Boston, seated between my sons. One has just watched an Icelandic cartoon, the other watching an Icelandic cooking show. I am in the midst of revising poems and making new ones, and in prose, trying to see how to architect narrative without renouncing the pleasure and texture of language.

Do you ever feel caught between?

Yes and no. I don't think of myself as “caught” in the sense of hindered as much as I used to, but rather: situated between contexts. Until my divorce this summer, I felt captured and gripped on the one hand by the constraints of a profoundly harrowing wifehood while simultaneously crescendo during the happiest and most fulfilling times of my life as a mother. I often observe the binary and dwell in its provocation.

What is essential to your creative process?

I have to walk or bike or run or swim or otherwise move with the world around me and bring language with me before I get to the page. I must read. I must provide for my children—ensure they are fed and prepared to learn. Getting in one very long day at least once a week—when I can wake at least two hours before the work of motherhood begins and when I can work uninterrupted for at least three hours after my children have gone to sleep—seems to be essential. I use caffeine judiciously; I drink copious amounts of water

when I write. Perhaps it's a fear of the well running dry.

Where do you belong?

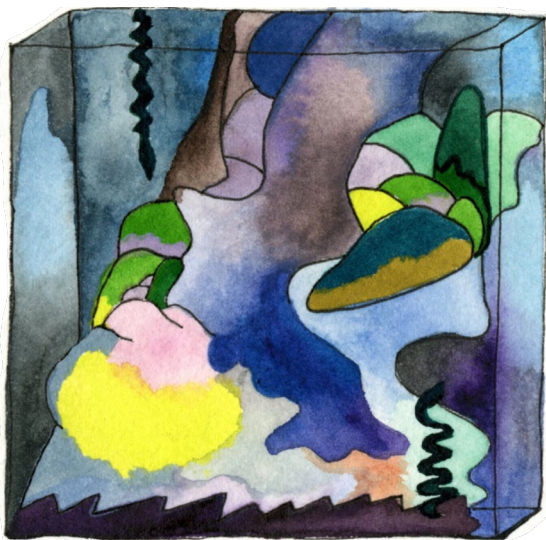
I belong with my sons. I belong in a place of significant weather. I certainly belong where there are many, many books. Increasingly, I feel I need to be in the city for much of my time. As much as I feel like I belong in the north, I think I'd like to think of different iterations of north: Boston, Helsinki, Reykjavík, Nunavut, Kharkiv, somewhere in Canada or Norway or Sweden. I'm not sure I belong in Alaska as it exists now.

What is next?

I have three manuscripts in progress: one book of poetry (*Dark Traffic*), one essay collection, and one book of prose that is narrative and autobiographical in nature. I'm also working on two collaborative projects in their early stages: one with other indigenous writers and scholars that looks at critical issues of aesthetics, place, and sovereign textual politics. The second is a reader of the circumpolar north. I'd like to remain in the Boston area so my sons can continue to benefit from the educational opportunities that are available in Cambridge's diverse and invested public school system. I'm on the job market somewhat—but I'm looking to choose the environment carefully. I cannot conceive of returning to Alaska just yet. The social, political, and environmental conditions are more erratic and dangerous than I've ever known them to be. And I've known the violence(s) of that place.

Joan Kane

Rookeries



All men knew a secret of the northern part
of an old world, a less perfect

idea. For the bicornuate woman,
it is an island. If there, the birds

lose our trust, we might learn

their language. After all, we have
been taught

to read and write,

to remove our hands

from other work

as we watch water twist into rock:

to cover our wounds,

staying alive light after light.

For something, I worry.

The moon pronounced with clarity

its known topography. Our letters
and lists, reconstructed grammars:

they replace the ways in which we were
grabbed, then pushed and shoved.

A fine wife and her children
set to rove with indefinite orders:

lineal migration on a small scale,
a purpose was not nautical,
but conflictual. Of those men,

we knew I could never do
them any good. In this way

I forget, and let the wind
(river). It gales and tears
at my shoulders and wrists.

Unable to construct a more compassionate narrative,
I have drowned and turned back into myself—
pitiless, traveling north against the waves. If,

at the end, I remain paper-thin, I do not want
to hear ceaselessly of it. I no longer circle
the graves of the dead, the ones who exact

so much from the living. Beneath a birch
whose limbs had grown too large I left
eleven laniaries and poppies gone to seed.

Some objects I slipped from their brackets.
Others we concealed from all seers, save
the skulk of polar foxes in their blue morph

who may soon inhabit what yet stands
of the house as we abandoned it. Let us
thwart deceptive emptiness, and suppose

a de-accessioned hawk and handsaw
through the scuttle, for I have—
I had— and would have had again.

Joan Kane

Rehearsal for Surveying the Ruins

THALIA submissions

Thalia is a community and magazine dedicated to fostering collaboration and celebrating creatives who identify with womanhood.

t h a l i a m a g a z i n e . c o m
c o n t a c t @ t h a l i a m a g a z i n e . c o m