

Abra-Zine!

**WINTER 2016
REFLECTIONS**

**COVER ART BY
LEONID AFREMOV**

**Contemplative
Collage of
Suzanne Brown
+Louvre Feature!**

**SILENT DIALOGUE
Interview with
Finland Portrait
Artist:
Markus Pitkänen**

**ARTIST SPOTLIGHT:
Natalia V. Evans**

**WOUNDED WORLD
WORKSHOP:
FREE ART THERAPY
E-COURSE INSIDE!**

ISSUE NO. 10

**"I AM ALIJAH"
Young Transgender
and His Journey of
SELF LOVE!**

**YOSEMITE
NATIONAL PARK:
A Photographer's
Visit By Kimberly
Arend - Porter**

**ALBUM REVIEW:
THE MUSIC OF
MATT COOK 75**

**PLUS:
Reflective
Poetry,
Stories,
Photography,
Art, Recipes,
Tarot Insight
and MORE!!!**



Spotify

**REFLECTIONS
PLAYLIST INSIDE!**

Leonid Afremov

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CREDITS.....	3
EDITOR'S NOTE.....	4
JOHN BOSWELL QUOTE.....	5

RECIPES

ROASTED FENNEL GARLIC SOUP AND SOOTHING TEAS	
ELLIE BRUCIA	6
NANA'S ALBONDIGAS SOUP	
SIMPLY GABRIELLE	7

FEATURED ARTISTS

COVER ARTIST	
LEONID AFREMOV.....	8 - 9
REFLECTIONS OF BLUE AND ORANGE	
ANTHONY LANGEVIN.....	10-11
CONTEMPLATIVE COLLAGE (LOUVRE ARTIST)	
SUZANNE BROWN.....	12-15
SILENT DIALOGUE (PORTRAIT ARTIST)	
MARKUS PITKÄNEN.....	16 -19
WINTER SCENES (CRAFT PAINTER)	
SERAFINA GIORDANO.....	20
THE MIRROR	
KARA HUNTZINGER.....	21
ARTIST SPOTLIGHT	
NATALIA V. EVANS.....	33

STORIES, POETRY, PHOTOGRAPHY

DARIONCE & THE KING OF THE TREES	
DARIUS CONWAY.....	22-23
MIRRORS	
COMIC BY JASON JACKSON.....	24-25
POETRY:	
LAURA FLASHBERG.....	26
SHELLEY SPRECHER-HITCH.....	27
ANGELA VELAZQUEZ.....	28
BENJAMIN TEURMAN.....	29
MIMI ADAMS MATTHEWS.....	30-31
RENEE FURLOW.....	32



Background Art: "Electric Blue"
By Markus Pitkänen (Finland)

MUSIC FEATURES

LAUGHING ON THE INSIDE	
CRYING ON THE OUTSIDE	
MATT COOK 75 ALBUM REVIEW	
BY JUSTINA CARUBIA.....	34-36
THE ENTITY OF AN ARTIST	
STEFAN L. SMITH	37

MEMOIRS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

I AM ALIJAH	
BY ALIJAH B. YOSHIDA.....	38-39
BECOMING WHO I'M MEANT TO BE	
BY KIMBERLY MCAFEE.....	40-42
LIVING UNSUSTAINABLY & FINDING HAPPINESS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES	
BY NICOLE LEE AGUILAR.....	43
THE DAY GOD GAVE ME A CLOWN MASK	
BY CHRISTA RIMMER.....	44-46
6 OF CUPS: THE CARD OF NOSTALGIA	
BY JUSTINA CARUBIA.....	47
A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE	
READER BLURBS.....	48

TRAVEL AND CULTURE

STAG VETS	
BY DARIUS CONWAY.....	49
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK	
BY KIMBERLY AREND-PORTER.....	50-51
WOUNDED WORLD WORKSHOP	
EXERCISE IN HEALING	
BY JUSTINA CARUBIA.....	52-55

THEME FOR NEXT ISSUE ON PAGE 58!

CREDITS



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ON THE COVER

Editor in Chief

JUSTINA CARUBIA

(Graphic Designer & Columnist)

Writer

Pages 4,8,12,34,35,47,53,54,58

Contributors

Alijah B. Yoshida (San Diego, CA, USA) Writing Pgs. 38-39
Angela Velazquez (MD, USA) Poetry Pg. 28
Anthony Langevin (Pensacola, FL, USA) Art Pg. 10-11
Avinash Patel (NJ, USA) Photography Pg. 34
Benjamin Teurman (MN, USA) Poetry Pg. 29
Christa Rimmer (AZ, USA) Writing/Photog./Blurb Pgs. 44-46
Darius Darionce Conway (GA, USA) Writing 22-23
Edi Nugraha (Nederland) Photography Pg. 14
Elise Bauer (Photo Courtesy of SimplyRecipes.com) Pg. 7
Elizabeth Brucia (London, UK) Recipes/Photography Pg. 6
Emma Clark Godfrey, Model Pg. 12
Gabby Le Clerc Cluck (San Diego, CA, USA) Recipe Pg. 7
Jason Jackson (NJ, USA) Comic/Writing Pgs. 24-25
Jean Julien (Paris, France) Pray For Paris Logo Pg. 53
Kara Huntzinger (Tampa, FL, USA) Art Pg. 21
Kimberly Arend Porter (NY, USA) Writing/Photog. Pgs.50-51
Kimberly McAfee (GA, USA) Writing/Art Pgs. 40-41
Laura Flashberg (NJ, USA) Poetry/Photography Pg. 26
Leonid Afremov (Playa Del Carmen, Mexico)
Art Pgs.1,3,8,9,52,54
Markus Pitkänen (Finland) Art Pgs. 2,3,6,16-19,43,60
Matthew Cook (NJ, USA) Music Pgs. 34-36
Mimi Adams Matthews (MI, USA) Poetry/Photog. Pgs. 30-31
Natalia V. Evans (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)
Art Pgs. 5,27-29,33,48
Nicolas Raymond (MD, USA) Art Pgs. 38,39,58
Nicole Aguilar (CA, USA) Writing Pg. 43
Renee Furlow (TX, USA) Poetry Pg. 32
Rick Kaplan (NJ, USA) Photography Pg. 59
Ry Piet (NJ, USA) Blurb Pg. 48
Serafina Carubia-Giordano (NJ, USA) Art Pg. 20
Shelley Hitch (MI, USA) Poetry/Blurb Pgs. 27,48
Stefan Landon Smith (CA, USA) Writing/Musician Pg. 37
Stephanie Law (CA, USA) Art Pg. 32
Suzanne Brown (PA, USA) Art/Photography Pgs. 12-15

Stock and Resources

Snowflake Pattern (TheDoodlePlace.com) Pgs.4,20,48,56
Fancy Frame Photoshop Brushes Pgs. 4,20,28,29,30,31)
John Boswell Quote Pg. 5
Josiah McEtheny Quote Pg. 12
Spiritsighs Foliage Photoshop Brushes Pg. 31
Aurora Wienhold Stock Pgs. 28,29,30,32,40,41
Music Notes Public Domain Pg. 37
Parchment - My Free Textures Pg. 37
Watercolor Photoshop Brushes Pg. 44-46
6 of Cups from Rider Waite Tarot Pg. 47
Winter Scene By ISOS Stock on DA Pg. 7
Christmas Stock Pack by Kuschelirmel-Stock on DA Pg. 7



"Cold Stroll" By Leonid Afremov

Playa Del Carmen, Mexico

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**READ MORE ABOUT LEONID
ON PAGES 8-9!**

**LISTEN TO OUR "REFLECTIONS"
CONTRIBUTOR PLAYLIST**

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COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

EMAIL US! [INFO@ABRAZINE.COM](mailto:info@abrazine.com)

"Abra-zine"'s mission is to showcase and promote the amazing artistic talent and inspiration from all over the globe! We find all of our contributors through word of mouth, personal connections or through scouting on social media. At anytime throughout the issue, when you see the interactive buttons, please click on them to take you to a contributor's external websites. Below are just a few of the common ones you will see!



Editor's Note

HAPPY 2016!



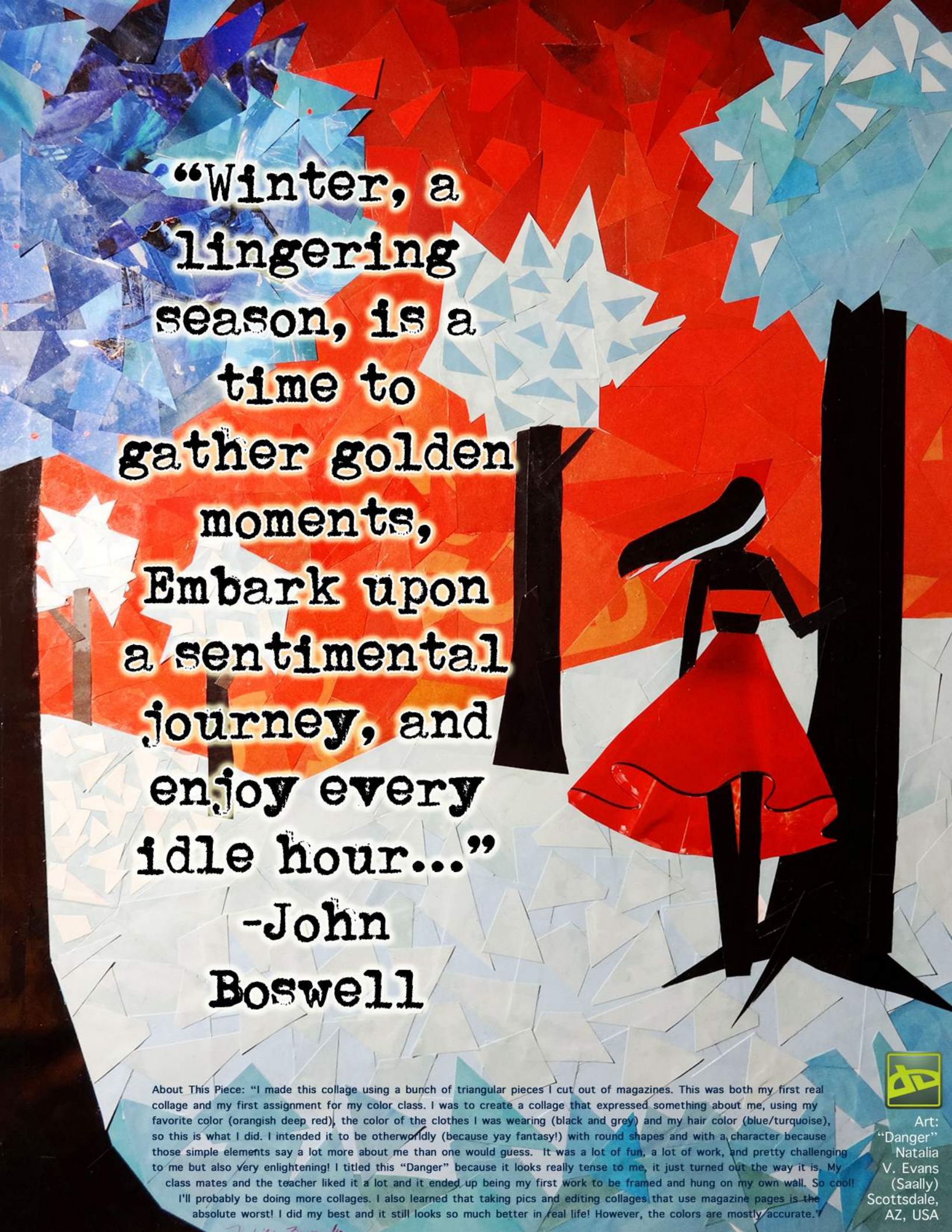
HELLO ABRA-ZINERS! I am writing this as I am about to celebrate my 32nd birthday. As I grow older, I am beginning to like the fact that my birthday is at the very end of the year. It gives me a chance to reflect on my whole past year, how I've grown and how I've changed. I think this personal reflection is essential to any sort of growth process.

This year as "Abra-zine" celebrates its TENTH ISSUE, it is so fitting to sit and take a moment to just reflect on this wonderful journey I had decided to embark on in the early winter of 2014. I happened upon this decision after my search for a community made up of artists, musicians, poets, storytellers and other creatives. I was finding a lot of cool websites and communities online, and even was introduced to a couple mastermind groups which really helped me focus my ideas, but they weren't exactly the communities that I had envisioned in my head. I don't know exactly what it was about these awesome communities that wasn't fulfilling to me, until I had realized that if I wanted to find exactly what I had envisioned in my head, then I had to CREATE it myself. I created a quick Weebly website, threw together some submission rules, started up a Facebook Group and added every creative person I knew. I started approaching interesting people for contributions and I was surprised by how many of them were ecstatic to be a part of something this collaborative.

Becoming a self-appointed facilitator of a creative community was something that I was just naturally drawn to. It is a dream to be able to give so many people a platform and outlet to speak their minds, tell their stories and share their wisdom. Their contributions have enriched my life as well as the lives of all of our readers. I created this safe haven for those from all walks of life. Some are young and ambitious creatives who aspire to be more epic versions of themselves, and some are more seasoned, successful artists who have not become corrupted by success, but rather humbled by their own journeys, eager to share their experiences with those who aspire to attain their ranks. Self-reflection is all about learning invaluable lessons. The greatest lesson that I have learned from my position as Editor In Chief over the last 2 years, is that we are ALL one in the same. We were all beginners and came from nothing, at one point. We all stem from the same seed, extend from the same root, come up out of the same ground, and flourish into the same tree. Each root and journey is a little bit different, but we are all striving to become the very best version of ourselves. We are all using our gift of experience to teach the lessons some of us have walked through fire and trudged through murkiness of despair in order to learn. I just want to take this time on this soapbox here to give a very HUGE thanks from the bottom of my heart to EVERYONE who has been involved in this E-mag over the past couple years. I still have A LOT to learn as editor, and look forward to expanding this venture even more so in the coming years. I have a lot of bright and exciting plans and cannot wait to pursue some of them over the next year! Thanks once again, and remember, if you are not growing, or learning, then you must reroute and shift your focus! REFLECT. KEEP STRIVING to become the best possible version of yourself you can be! Thank you all. I really hope you enjoy this issue. Happy New Year! I love you all!

Justina Carubia

XOXO



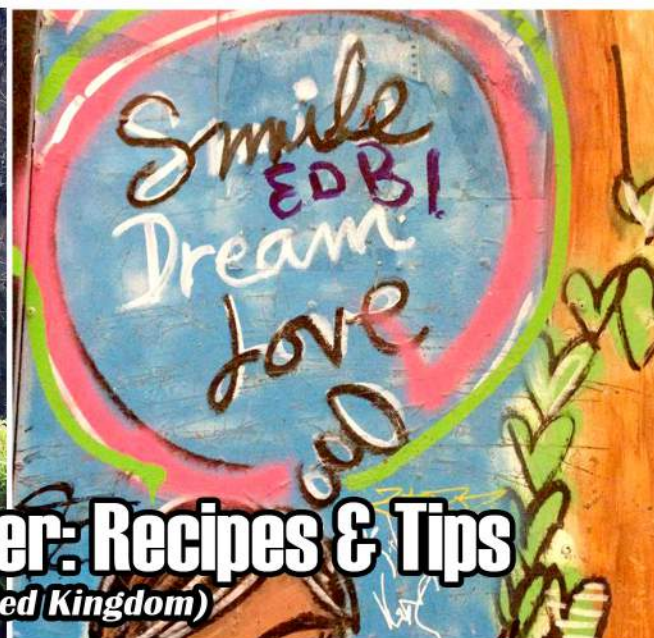
**“Winter, a
lingering
season, is a
time to
gather golden
moments,
Embark upon
a sentimental
journey, and
enjoy every
idle hour...”**

**-John
Boswell**

About This Piece: “I made this collage using a bunch of triangular pieces I cut out of magazines. This was both my first real collage and my first assignment for my color class. I was to create a collage that expressed something about me, using my favorite color (orangish deep red), the color of the clothes I was wearing (black and grey) and my hair color (blue/turquoise), so this is what I did. I intended it to be otherworldly (because yay fantasy!) with round shapes and with a character because those simple elements say a lot more about me than one would guess. It was a lot of fun, a lot of work, and pretty challenging to me but also very enlightening! I titled this “Danger” because it looks really tense to me, it just turned out the way it is. My class mates and the teacher liked it a lot and it ended up being my first work to be framed and hung on my own wall. So cool! I’ll probably be doing more collages. I also learned that taking pics and editing collages that use magazine pages is the absolute worst! I did my best and it still looks so much better in real life! However, the colors are mostly accurate.”



Art:
“Danger”
Natalia
V. Evans
(Saally)
Scottsdale,
AZ, USA



A Balanced Winter: Recipes & Tips

By Ellie Brucia (London, United Kingdom)

The winter is a great time for drawing inwards, reflection and rest. But it is also a time when, if we do not apply some self-care, we may be more susceptible to colds, and weakness and stagnation in the body. Here are some tips for using herbs to help keep your body comfortable and balanced during the cold winter months.



Roasted Fennel and Garlic Soup

Any kind of soup is great to have during the winter, but this one is one of my personal favorites. Both fennel and garlic are linked to the element of fire, and both share the magical attributions of promoting protection and physical strength, which we could use during the cold time of year! Fennel also helps with strengthening the solar plexus chakra (our sun center!). Roasted garlic has a nice mild taste that is even a bit sweet, and roasting fennel brings out a lovely, aromatic smell in your kitchen and home.

(Serves 2)

Ingredients:

Extra Virgin Olive Oil

2 Fennel Bulbs

About 9 Unpeeled Whole Garlic Cloves (or to taste)

Sea Salt

Black Pepper

- Preheat oven at 180 C/350 F
- Wash and slice fennel bulbs vertically, in medium-thin slices
- Lay fennel pieces on a baking tray (be careful not to layer too many pieces of fennel on top of each other)
- Add garlic cloves to the tray
- Drizzle olive oil, and sprinkle sea salt and black pepper
- Roast for about 30 minutes or less (can check in and observe the softness of the fennel- it normally browns)
- Remove tray from oven. Allow to cool a bit, and peel the skin off of the garlic
- Move the fennel and garlic to a food processor and blend with some water. Move to a pot to reheat before serving.

Rosemary Body Oil

Rosemary is associated with the Sun. Adding a few drops of rosemary essential oil to a bottle of jojoba oil, and rubbing it on your body after a shower or bath, is a great way to give your body a nice dose of Sun energy. Rosemary oil is a stimulator, and is also good for improving our circulation. It helps us to get our blood moving again after being in the stagnating cold. Also, it smells like Christmas!

Soothing Teas

Ginger Tea

Ginger is amazing. It is great for fighting colds and warming the body. It also helps with circulation, and helps to unblock our energy channels. Cut some slices of fresh ginger root and add some hot water to enjoy a delicious cup.

Lemon Thyme Tea

This tea is also really good for if you're fighting a cold. Thyme has many health benefits.

It is full of vitamins, antioxidants and minerals, and it is an antiseptic. It helps to relieve coughs. It is a beautiful tea to have on its own, but mixed with lemon, its cold- fighting power is enhanced!





WARMING WINTER MEMORIES & HEARTY MEALS BY SIMPLY GABRIELLE



Get More Recipes and Fun
on Gabby's Youtube Channel!

Winter is such a profound season for me. The winter is a time when we reflect upon the months that have gone by. For me, winter makes me think of when I was a little girl and I lived with my nana. It brings back memories of how she would cook, and how the house was filled with warmth and love. Her house was like that throughout the whole year, but winter was the best. We would watch good movies, she would make awesome soups, homemade flower tortillas, artichokes, and it was just all about her showing us how to appreciate and relish in the comforts of home. Back then winters were winters, meaning it would rain heavy and get dark and cold. As I'm older now, I look back on the memories of my grandparents and home, and it fills me with warmth and comfort. I too make the same chicken and beef soups, as well as albondigas soup, the same way my grandmother made it for us: with a lot of LOVE. I also make gorditas and my mother was famous for her cream of wheat cereal and Avena which is a Mexican Oatmeal thickened with milk and infused with cinnamon and clove. For me the winter is a time to remember the ones that are not here any longer. It's a time when celebrate the traditions that my grandmother instilled in me and when it's dark and rainy, I think of her. As a practicing witch, winter is also about death, rebirth, and the cycles of nature, so it's extra special for me. It's also about life's lessons and what we have learned throughout the whole year. It is a time when we can make peace with ourselves and one another, and also about just enjoying the company of the ones we love.

NANA'S ALBONDIGAS (MEATBALL SOUP) RECIPE



Here are the ingredients to my soup. I do not measure anything, I kind of just eyeball how much of everything I add, and also the spices should be added to taste, so feel free to add as much or little as anything you'd like. Also feel free to add other veggies to your stew as well, or substitute any of the veggies I used if you don't like certain ones. (Photo on left was taken by Elise Bauer courtesy of www.simplyrecipes.com)

INGREDIENTS

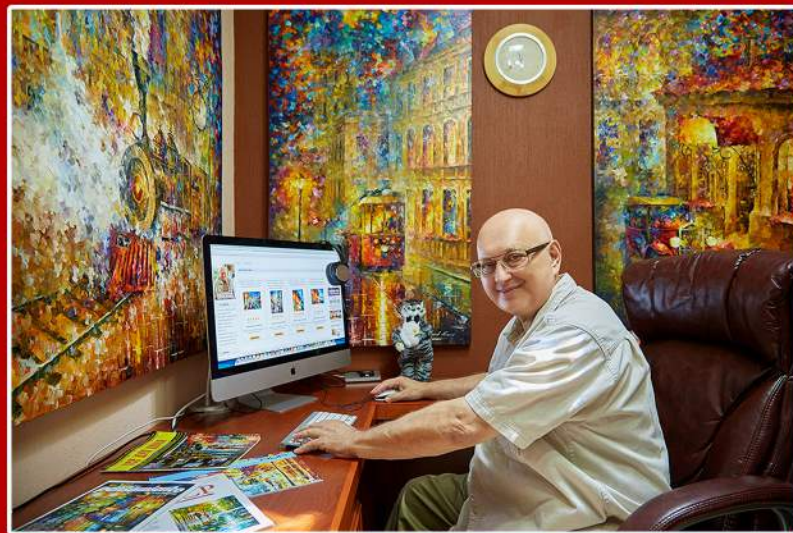
- 1 Pound of Ground Beef
- Pinch of Salt
- Pinch of Pepper
- Pinch of Cumin
- 1 Cup of uncooked Rice
- Water
- A Few Carrots
- A Couple Potatoes
- 1 Cabbage
- Beef Bullion
- 1 Onion
- 1 Clove of Garlic

DIRECTIONS

1. Get a large mixing bowl and add your ground beef, salt and pepper and cumin, and 1 cup of uncooked rice. The rice will keep the meat together, so you don't need to add any egg. Mix it all together and make little meat balls.
2. Get a good size soup pan and add water filled to the top. Add the meatballs, then add your chopped carrots, potatoes, and cabbage, onions, and garlic. Cook it on a low flame for about an hour or two.
3. Add a package of beef bullion to the soup and any other seasonings you want.
4. Once it's cooked you'll know, because the meatballs will rise to the top and your vegetables will be soft. You're ready to serve!

THE WINTERY REFLECTIONS OF COVER ARTIST LEONID AFREMOV

BY JUSTINA CARUBIA



Leonid Afremov was born in the city of Vitebsk, Belarus in 1955. He was born in the same town as Marc Chagall, the famous artist who also founded the Vitebsk Art School along with Malevich & Kandinsky. It is no wonder he is such a natural, he was practically born with a brush – actually, that's the thing. Leonid is a painter, but not by brush. Although he has admittedly tried out different painting techniques throughout his very successful career, he is most known for his technique in painting with a palette knife and oil paints!

The first thing you might notice about Leonid's pieces is that they are rich in color and explode with warmth and vibrance! Mr. Afremov has really perfected the art of painting the reflection. Most of his paintings depict scenery in public parks, sidewalks, cafes, streets and bridges as people go about their daily lives taking a stroll, walking their dogs, kissing in the rain, visiting a landmark, etc. His paintings really express what life is truly all about. He makes the mundane look like a festival of colorful confetti. Leonid's speciality seems to be capturing these scenes, fresh after a rain shower, or melting snow. He captures the water's reflection off the pavement with individual paint strokes using his palette knife alone. One can only imagine how long it takes to complete each piece, using a process that involves individual paint strokes!

Leonid explains on his Deviant Art Biography, "Every artwork is the result of a long painting process; every canvas is born during the creative search; every painting is full of my inner world. Each of my paintings brings different moods, colors, and emotions. I love to express the beauty, harmony, and spirit of this world in my paintings. My heart is completely open to art." He goes on, "Each of my artworks reflects my feelings, sensitivity, passion, and the music from my soul. True art is alive and inspired by humanity. I believe that art helps us to be free from aggression and depression."

Leonid has over a hundred paintings in his repertoire, and counting, which goes to show just how much time he spends honing and perfecting his craft. It is apparent that it is a passion that goes beyond the canvas. He graduated from the Vitebsk Art School in Belarus in 1978 and is one of the elite members. He has since then relocated many times but eventually settled to his current residence in Playa Del Carmen, Mexico where he continues to revel in his love for painting in his studio. Leonid's art is currently being collected all over the world, including the USA, Israel, Italy, France, England, Spain, Norway, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many more!

The pieces featured here are as follows: (Below) "Cold Emotions", (Following Page) 1. Winter Stream, 2. Winter Park, 3. Melody of the Night, 4. The Energy of Winter, 5. Frozen Feelings.



WWW.AFREMOV.COM



Reflections of BLUE and ORANGE



Interview With Painter Anthony Langevin

(Pensacola FL)



AZ: Hi Anthony! Thanks so much for chatting with us today! What inspired you to create these art pieces about Reflection?

AL: I really love these paintings because they are early works of mine, before I had any money to buy canvasses. A friend of mine gave me some old ones he was going to throw out; one was bright orange the other dark blue. I had no idea what I wanted to do with them, I only knew that I had to make my choice based on the colors I was provided with. So as I wondered, I decided that I wanted to accentuate the colors I was given and bring out the aura of each, yet add my own reflection.

AZ: Did you initially set out to create this series about the theme of Reflections... or was it just something that happened organically in the creative process?

AL: No, I did not set out to make either of my reflections; they were definitely something that happened as I painted them. I painted my Blue and Orange reflections at the same time wanting to incorporate how I felt about the colors themselves; Orange having a bright abstract look while Blue is more calm and well formed.

AZ: Which is your favorite (orange or blue) and why?

AL: Which is my Favorite? That's like asking, "Which half of your baby do u like more?" They are twin works; they each show a different side of the coin. Just as they are both reflections, they are reflections of each other. They were both a milestone in my life as an artisan, and both a piece of my soul.

AZ: Do both the orange and blue colors each signify a different feeling to you? and How so?

AL: Yes, they do. Orange represented to my ability to imagine and create, to be more fantastical, and gave me a way to express my artistic freedom. Blue was my way to see the practical use of my art, the simple beauty and depth of work ethic.

AZ: Do you plan on adding any other colors to your Reflection series? If so, which colors, and what would they represent?

AL: Honestly I never considered making a series of my "Reflection" pieces, they were such early works in my art and I had such little supplies that I didn't know when I would next be able to paint. Though now thinking about the question, I may decide to make another "Reflection". If so, I like the idea of maybe painting one in black and white, to better show how drastic a reflection can be.

AZ: What does the word Reflection mean to you and how can you use the concept to better identify with yourself?

AL: "Reflection"(s) Orange and Blue were great turning point for me; I had never done such a big project before. To me, "Reflection" meant reflecting my talent to others. Though it also reflected back to me as well. As Artists, we know a picture is worth 1000 words; though we should count ourselves lucky if our viewer reads but 10 of them. It was I as an artist that needed to find my 1000 words.



Both Paintings,
"Reflection Orange"
and "Reflection
Blue" by Anthony
Langevin (18 years
old, from Pensacola,
Florida), are done in
the Acrylic Medium!

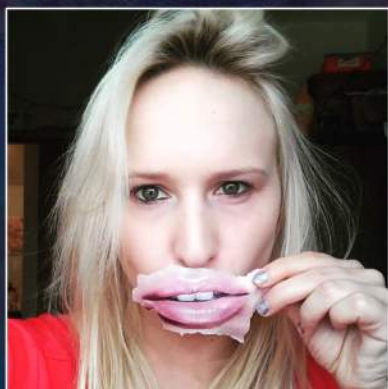


"If 'the reflective' can be described as a medium, it is one in which the viewer becomes the author, because without the viewer it is impossible to discern the something, or even the nothing that is there."
-Josiah McElheny 2004

(Josiah McElheny is an artist and sculptor, primarily known for his work with glass blowing and assemblages of glass and mirrored glassed objects. He is a 2006 recipient of the MacArthur Fellows Program "Genius Grant".)
Background
Photography:
Suzanne Brown
Model:
Emma
Clark
Godfrey.

Contemplative Collage

Spotlight on Suzanne Brown



Suzanne Brown is a 22 year old Lancaster, Pennsylvania-born artist. She has come to make quite a name for herself with her mixed media of paint and collaged portraits, which are heavily influenced by international sociopolitical issues, addressing topics such as rape culture, sexism, poverty, and abuse. It is her lethal combination of raw talent and gall, that bring light to such often "swept under the rug" important issues, which have called attention to the work that she produces and publicizes. Her work has garnered this attention via a multitude of various national gallery exhibits from 2014 to present, including NYC, PA, and Miami. This past July she had the once in a lifetime global opportunity to have her work exhibited in The Body Collection Photography series, at the infamous Louvre in Paris, France. This collection was presented to all exhibitors as part of the Fifth Annual Exposure Award.

Suzanne spends most of her free time trying to get her work into galleries and various exhibits, but in the meantime she has also started to lend herself more to getting her hands a bit dirty. She loves to paint and experiment with collage. The following page displays a collage of some of her most eye-catching work to date. From top to bottom, left to right are pieces she has displayed on her official site and social media such as Instagram and Facebook: "Painted on Thick", "Playing Doctor", Unnamed Mixed Media Portrait, "Paint + Photo = #EyeTried", "Self Portraits and Breezy Summer Evenings", and "Selfie" which was created with lipstick and q-tips as opposed to the traditional paint and brushes. Her ability to think outside the box even in the mediums she uses, sets her apart from the traditional "norm" and gives her work a unique edge that truly is all her own.

Currently, Suzanne resides in Philadelphia, PA where she is a full time student pursuing her BFA in Photography at Temple University. She is a former Chinese Intelligence Major and also has experience doing PSA voice acting for a radio station in Erie, PA for about a year. Suzanne has also shot events for Budweiser, including Made in America. You can read more about her on her official website and social media!

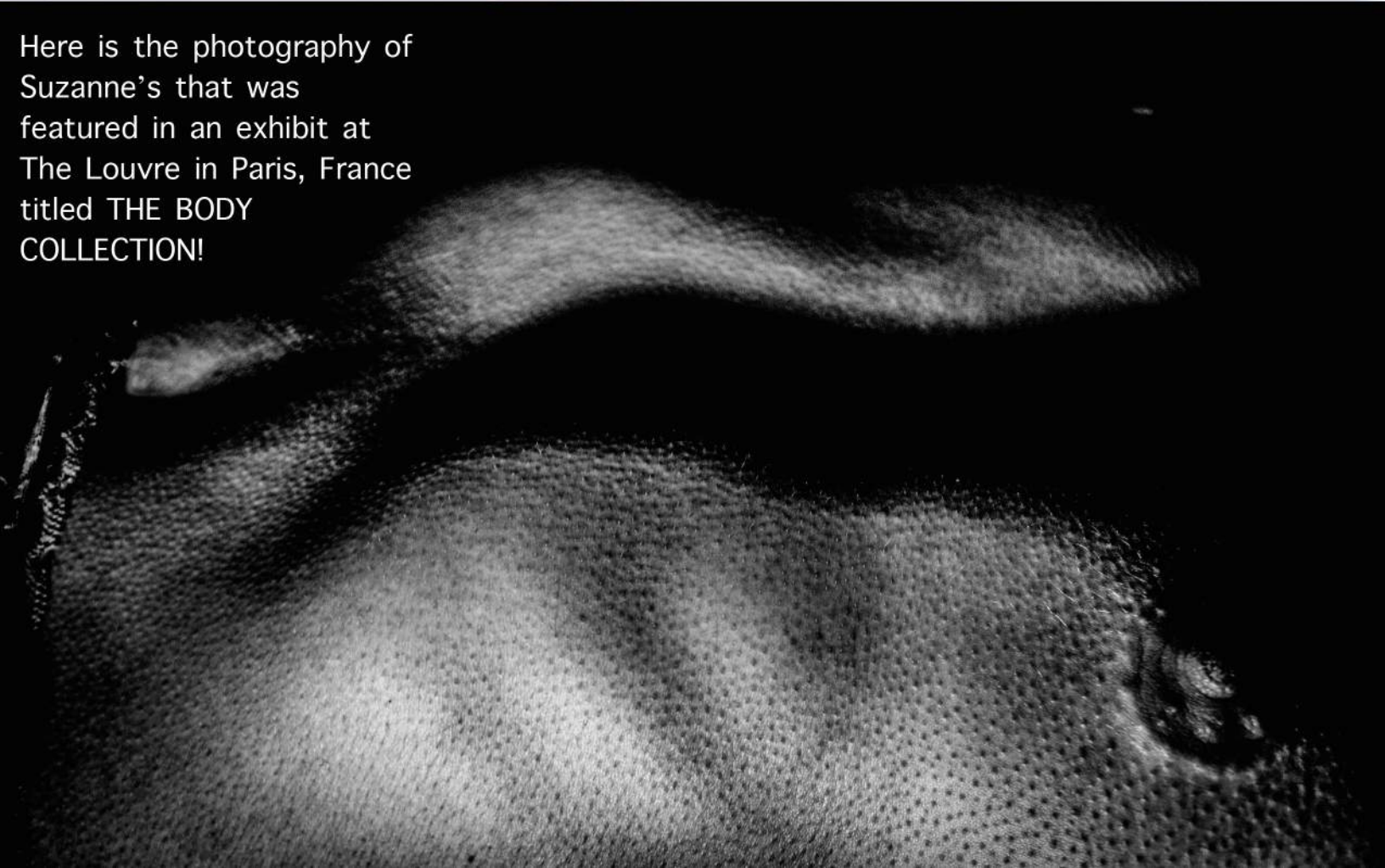
www.SVZanneBrown.com



The Louvre in Paris, France
Photo By: Edi Nugraha
Den Haag/Nederland



Here is the photography of
Suzanne's that was
featured in an exhibit at
The Louvre in Paris, France
titled THE BODY
COLLECTION!





Q&A

WITH SUZANNE



AZ: Tell us a little bit about the sociopolitical issues that inspire you to create the art you make, and how do you think creating art surrounding these issues, can bring more awareness to such issues?

SB: I have always been fascinated by issues like poverty and abuse, but lately I've been fixated on sexism and rape culture, and how these issues affect children. The majority of my work is not in-your-face about what it is addressing, but I have been told quite a few times that my work makes people feel really uncomfortable. I feel like that's a start to bringing change. I hope that making people feel uncomfortable will force them to think seriously about rape culture and, at the very least, be more compassionate.

AZ: Do you think your own art has been making a positive impact in bringing these darker issues to light for people to start thinking and talking about, and if so, how?

SB: It is a slow start, but definitely! There's a series that I made that placed rape validations over photos of children. It started quite a few arguments in classroom critiques and online, and I got a lot of insulting emails (which I consider a success because it made viewers angry!). I think if looking at a piece of art makes you angry enough to send a hate message to the artist, they're definitely spending a bit of time thinking about it, whether they agree with the statement or not.

AZ: Talk to us a little more about your mixed media pieces... A lot of them seem like they contain collaged elements of facial features and such. Are these usually photos of your own facial features, or images you find in magazines, etc? What is your process like for creating these mixed media pieces?

SB: They're usually a combination of photos I've taken of friends, selfies, and cut-outs from magazines. This is definitely going to sound depressing, but usually these collages are a result of me feeling frustrated with my own appearance. When I make them, it's a hands-on reminder to myself that yeah, I can easily cut and paste this perfect nose and these pouty lips into a pretty face, but that doesn't make the face real (or any photoshopped model's, for that matter).

AZ: This season, we are exploring theme of Reflection... How do you think your artwork relates to themes of Reflection?

SB: I think my work relates to Reflection in that they're all portraits created out of reflecting upon upsetting issues. Perhaps?

AZ: Self Portraits can be seen as Reflective pieces of art, how do you think creating self-portraits can help us grow as artist and as people? Do you do any self portrait art at all?

SB: Definitely! It's the ultimate test. For me it's like choosing between how I want to see myself versus my ego as an artist. I can either make a pretty print and feel nice about the way I look (and feel like a not-so-skilled artist) or I can really pay attention to the details (as if I were doing a portrait of somebody else) and create a real image. I think self portraits help everyone grow.

AZ: Tell us a little bit about how your art came to be featured at the Louvre! Did you travel to Paris at all to celebrate and view your own exhibition, and if so, how was that experience?

SB: It was a result of being in two different shows/galleries that had a connection to the show in Paris. It was all pretty coincidental. Sadly, I didn't get to see it because I was busy selling Crocs to pay for school. That's alright, though; I'm insanely happy that I got the chance to be involved.

AZ: Well that is so exciting! And congrats on your accomplishments! We at Abra-zine wish you all the best with your future endeavors! Thanks so much for taking the time to chat with us today!

SB: Thanks for having me!





Portrait Artist
Markus Pitkänen
(Finland)



Silent Dialogue

INTERVIEW WITH MARKUS PITKÄNEN
REFLECTIVE PORTRAITS PAINTER

AZ: Hi Markus! Can you tell our readers a little bit about your country of Finland? Our magazine has many readers and contributors all around the world, and we really pride ourselves on teaching everyone about different lifestyles and cultures!

MP: I'm maybe not the best person to talk about Finland since I'm kind of outsider, a weirdo. Finland is wealthy and peaceful land of taciturn and unhappy people. It's November, it's dark all the time. Ask me this question in summer when I'm drunk from sunlight.

AZ: At what age did you start to paint, and what age did you realize that painting was what you wanted to do for a living?

MP: I have painted longer than I can remember, started probably when I was two years old. I decided to make a career of it when I was teenager - at first I thought about just making pictures, then in art school when I was twenty I decided that painting will be my specialty.

AZ: Did you have a lot of formal education in Art? If so, what were some of the most important things you learned during your time as a student, and how do you think those lessons have shaped the artist you have become today?

MP: I have five years of formal education in the Arts. First when I was twenty in 1993, I went to one year of preparatory art courses and the year after that I continued at a four year art school for professional training. I have also had non-formal training in the Arts, since I had a professional artist as a mentor from early childhood. I learned different techniques of painting, from fast expressive speed paint to time consuming layered oil painting techniques. The most important thing was to learn different ways of painting. If you know many techniques, then later down the line you can make your own mixture from them. Skill and knowledge help to develop your own style in a way where you have a choice on how you will paint instead of just painting with the technique that comes naturally.

AZ: What kind of advice can you give to other up and coming artist who are looking to pursuing a career in Art, or more specifically, Painting?

MP: Some other good advice to any artist is to learn to draw good and learn to work fast. Even if you work with slow techniques, when you do the final ready version of artwork, it's important to know how to work fast so you can sketch and put on paper your first impressions quickly, even if it's just for recording ideas.



An abstract painting of a woman's face, rendered in a style reminiscent of Vincent van Gogh. The face is the central focus, with soft, blended colors of pink, white, and light blue. The eyes are dark and expressive, and the mouth is a vibrant red. A large, pink, textured flower is positioned on the right side of the face, as if tucked into the hair. The background is a complex, swirling mix of colors including deep blues, greens, reds, and yellows, with visible brushstrokes that add to the texture and emotional intensity of the piece.

"Something
to Remember"

AZ: I really love your piece titled "Something to Remember"... as memories go hand in hand with themes of Reflection... can you tell us a little bit about the backstory, and what inspired you to create this piece?

MP: Oh no! I cannot tell anything. It was a private conversation with a fellow artist that inspired the piece!



AZ: Let's talk about your style a little bit! Who are some of your biggest influences on your painting career? I see a lot of Matisse and even a little Picasso in your portrait, figure and abstract pieces! Were they influential in your work at all? If not, who else really inspired you to become the painter you are today?

MP: Many painters and artists have been influential in my work, but modernists from the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century are closest to my style. Matisse has been a great influence and my style resembles his work most naturally. Those kind of pictures come most effortlessly to me. I have done works that have looked like Matisse even before I had actually seen any of his work, so he's not so much an influence, but more like a kindred spirit in art. I like many Picasso drawings and his etchings, but the colorful worlds in Matisse's paintings are much more pleasing to me. Other painters who have been influential to my work are Norwegian Artist, Edward Munch (the paintings I have created in Art school have a much stronger Munch vibe), Finnish artist Helene Schjerfbeck (I was more influenced by her stylized way of drawing, and not so much by her austere color world), and numerous French Impressionists mainly, as well as Neo Impressionists and other Modernists. Comic books and comic book artists have also been of great influence, mainly in the way I draw, but also in the bright and clear way I use color. Frank Miller and Hugo Pratt are some comic book artists whose drawing style I appreciate.

AZ: To get into talking about the theme of Reflections, let's talk about your portraits! What is your favorite thing about painting portraits?

MP: Painting portraits presents some interesting challenges and dilemmas. My portraits are abstract and surreal and it's that kind of art that comes most naturally to me. It's also kind of the antithesis to traditional portrait painting. There's always some degree of Realism in them, if they're real portraits, not just allegorical figures, but resemblance to the model is not my main concern in my portrait painting. Often I start with drawing what looks like the model, but change it considerably when painting. The most interesting thing about painting portraits is creating a sense of cohesiveness between what can be seen outwards - 'realism' and the 'message' - be it visually, without a meaning, like a pure abstraction or psychological message. That is the surreal part of the picture.

AZ: Self Portraits can be seen as Reflective pieces of art, how do you think creating self-portraits can help us grow as artist and as people?

MP: The self is a model that's always available and the one you know best. In my way of doing portraits there isn't much difference between doing a self portrait, or a portrait of another person. You learn something about making pictures and about human psyche either way.



AZ: Which do you prefer, or which comes more natural to you: 1) painting portraits & figures, 2) painting landscapes, or 3) painting abstracts? You do them all beautifully, but I know sometimes as artists we put a gauge on our own strengths and weaknesses (I love painting scenes and nature, but I think I'm horrible at portraits!)....What is your opinion about your own preference?

MP: Painting abstracts comes most naturally to me, but I like to challenge myself with portraits.

AZ: The term "Reflection" can have many different meanings. It can mean the physical manner in which light bounces around, or it can even be more figuratively, in a more reminiscent sense. When you reflect on the past, what is one of your favorite memories of your life, in retrospect?

MP: One of my favorite memories is when I first met my cat, and it buried its small body in my beard, seeking refuge.

AZ: I love your piece titled "1994"! What is the significance and inspiration behind this piece and its title? Was that a significant year in your life?

MP: 1994 goes with another title on another site and in the fine book where it's featured. The symbolism in this painting is fairly simple. It's about love and passion - seeing red, which is evident in the picture. 1994 was significant year in my life because it was then that I had started my studies in art school. Another title for this work is "Fracture", which is more universal and easily understandable.

AZ: Talk to us a bit about your piece "Dementia"... what inspired this piece and its name?

MP: I worked with "Dementia" for a long time and the painting went through many changes during that time. At first it was a warm and friendly looking portrait. Then, after hearing some bad news the painting changed to a depiction of horror and angst. I finished the picture after working on it to look as abstract as possible but still maintaining the look of a portrait. It was a means to forget all conflicting emotions during the making process, that's why the title is "Dementia".

AZ: Thank you so much for talking with us today, it was great getting to know more about you and your artwork!

MP: It was fun to do this interview, thank you!



WINTER SCENES

WITH NJ
CRAFT PAINTER
FIFI GIORDANO



TREE AND BARN

What inspired me to recreate this painting when I first saw it was its dark emptiness. It had no background or clouds which forced me to focus on the foreground itself. This gave me an overall feeling of calmness, tranquility and silence. (Above Painting)

SNOWMAN PLATE

I was intrigued when I first saw this painting because I realized that it had encompassed several techniques that I have learned over my time studying. One of these techniques was dry brushing, which gives it a heartwarming look in a cold winter nature environment! I was excited to recreate it in the version you see here. (To the Right)



Artwork:
"The Mirror"
By Kara
Huntsinger
(26, Florida, USA)



Interview with
Kara Huntsinger

THE MIRROR

AZ: Hi Kara! I LOVE this piece of art! What inspired it?

KH: The art piece was inspired by the ambient song "The Mirror" by Robert Rich. There are no lyrics, however the atmosphere of the song made my mind wander.

AZ: What medium is it done in and how long did it take to finish?

KH: Acrylic paint on watercolor paper and it took approximately 10 hours.

AZ: Why do you think it is necessary for us as artists to reflect on our lives before creating the art we put out into the world?

KH: Reflecting on our lives is an important part of the process of creating art. In order to create a personal piece, especially in contemporary art, finding one's inner most attributes that trigger our emotions is key. Being in touch with who we are, where we come from, what makes us a part of our culture, how it affects us, how it effects others, and ultimately, what emotions it sends to the world are important to the process of making a work of art. By accomplishing this we give others information about us, we provide a better understanding of how artists think, and we share our emotions to hopefully create a connection.

AZ: What are some ways that you like to reflect on your own life?

KH: For this particular art piece, I thought about how it feels to be in a mindset where there is a desperate yearning for a part of your past in which you wish you could relive those beautiful innocent times. You feel as if you're being shackled down by metaphorical chains and lost in a cold dense reality, though you view yourself in the mirror knowing that the reflection staring back is the same person that used to be happy. In general though, looking back on the more charismatic accomplishments through completed goals, grades, and positive feedback is what keeps me

AZ: What is your favorite childhood winter memory?

KH: My favorite memory would have to be when I first visited Peddler's Village in Pennsylvania with family for the first time. The quaint little historic village with rustic shops and cozy restaurants were numerous, but the most magical part of it were the colorful arrangement of lights twinkling around the snow-covered trees. Everything, from the food to the architecture was absolutely gorgeous and got me in the winter spirit.

Darioncé and The King of the Trees

BY DARIUS CONWAY



Part II of The Stoop People Series (Read Part 1: "Darioncé and the Witch's Tower" in our last Day of the Dead Issue!)

It was a fine day out. Sunny and bright. Darioncé, the little girl who had been trapped her whole life in a witch's tower, was finally free. Her long black hair was flowing in the light breeze and she was with her new friends, The Stoop People. The 3 weird men were creature-like, but were full of life and good spirit. The raft sailed through the waves and the friends sipped on freshly squeezed berries and bread rolls. They were grateful to have escaped the witch's captivity that they have endured over the many years. However, they were very worried about the uncertainty that the never-ending horizon had presented before them. Where would the raft settle? What will they have to endure? How will they survive much longer on the remnants of food left? And what will they see? Darioncé was hoping for a better future for herself and her new friends.

The bright day began to turn into a creepy, thick, gray, smoggy fog. As the foursome drifted through the waters, the noises of the wild could be heard. Birds of the night chirped, frogs were grumping, and animals of the land were howling. As the sounds grew louder, they knew they were near land. One of The Stoop People, Jon, was tall, thin, and full of long red hair. He used his keen sense of direction to navigate towards the noises, and he helped the raft stumble onto the sandy, wet, and bumpy land. Upon finding the land, the crew had known they arrived to a place of faith and were that much closer to finding a life of freedom.

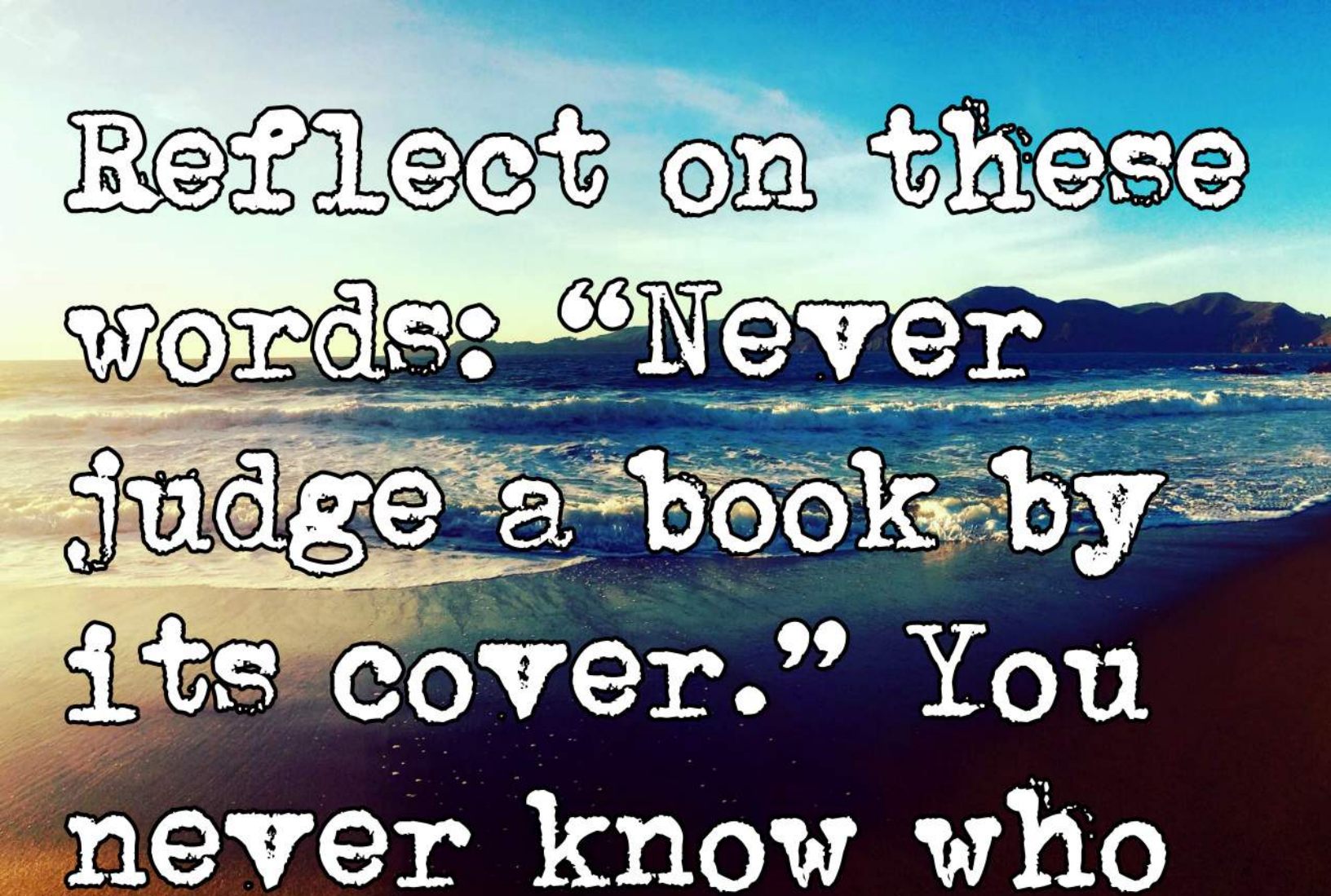
Darioncé gathered the raft with her three friends. They had helped her come so far and she thanked them for all of their help. They needed to now rest after a long journey on the raft after escaping the witch's tower. They used materials that had been taken from the tower to create a fire and minimal shelter covering. The night passed and morning was upon them. Jack, another stoop person, woke first. He yelled, "Everyone wake up! Everyone hurry... look!!!" The others awoke slowly to what Jack was staring at. There behind them was a thick forest-like land. Trees the size of towers had met the sky. They were all adorned with thick, huge leaves and old wrinkled trunks that have stood the tests of time. Greenery was everywhere and was a luscious and promising site for the foursome to take in.

Darioncé talked with the crew and they decided to head into the forest. They descended into the thickets for what seemed like hours, not knowing what was ahead of them. What would become of their fate? "She's stepping on me father! Hehe..." As the ground shakes a bit, Darioncé yells, "Take cover!" as she ducks to the ground with the others. Just then, they heard sounds of chuckling, "Hehehehe! We're not going to hurt you... Just be gentle as you walk! We haven't been used to creatures like you, in a while. It tickles! I'm Luther, King of the Trees and this is Asa, one of my thousands of spuns..."

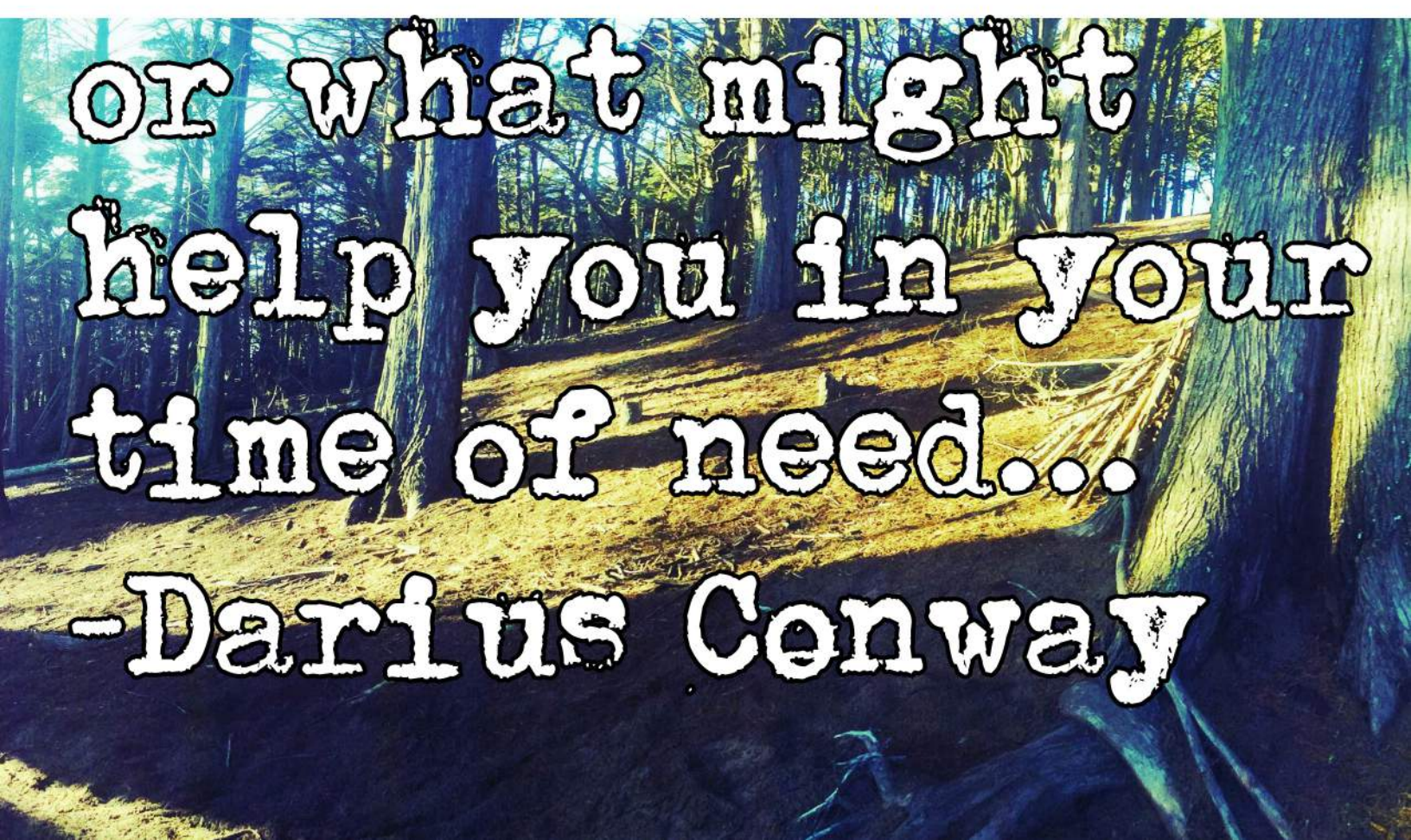
Darioncé gets up from her knees. "Hi, I'm Darioncé and we're just traveling to find freedom." Luther responds, "Little lady, how do you find freedom?" Darioncé explained to Luther what had happened to her and her friends and how they were on a newfound quest for freedom. Luther directed them to a trail that he knew most creatures of Darioncé's kind would sometimes venture on. He warned her that it would be tough and cold, but that it would lead her to great rewards if she and her friends conquered it. They just needed to reflect on the true meaning of what it meant, to be on the search of freedom. He gave them a list of supplies to gather for their trip. They needed wood for fire, water to quench their thirst, and materials for fishing to keep their bellies full. The King also blessed them with the gift of warmth, by boiling a piece of his bark in water and having them ingest it. After thanking Luther, King of the Trees, off they went! They trailed through the thick lumber towering above them.

Suddenly, it became quite cloudy and the sounds of thunder boomed in the distance. They had just begun the journey and already it was warning them of the obstacles that lied ahead. Regardless of the doubts, they were happy to be on this new adventure with each other. They have already conquered escaping the witch's tower. They are one step closer to their "freedom"!TO BE CONTINUED.....





Reflect on these
words: "Never
judge a book by
its cover." You
never know who



or what might
help you in your
time of need...
-Darius Conway



MIRRORS

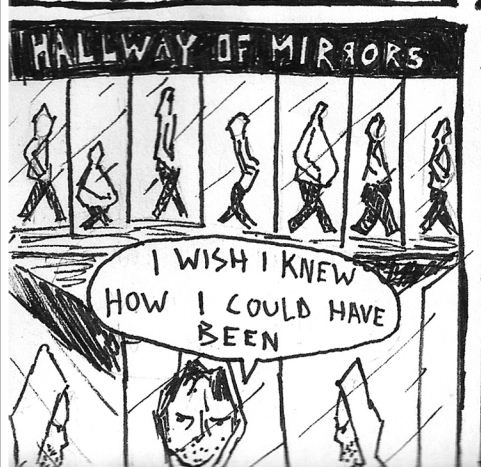


Original Comic
by J. Jackson

Have you ever wondered what your life would be like if you had done things differently? Do you believe in fate, and that the paths we take are opened to us by some power of the universe? Do you sometimes wish you could go back and change just ONE tiny thing that may have altered your life in a profound way?

I face myself in the mirror everyday and wonder, "How is it that THIS is where I am at this stage of life?" Is it a force of nature, poor decisions, or situational circumstance? This is a story of a man who is at a crossroads in his life, battling his darkest thoughts, and wishing he knew the person he is meant to be.

This is my first illustration of a short story where a man pays a nostalgic visit to the annual town carnival while battling his darkest thoughts.





Poem & Photo
By Laura Flashberg
(New Jersey, USA)

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE
THERE IS NO REFLECTION
ANYMORE.....
THE SOUL HAS BEEN SUCKED
DRY.....
MY HEART IS SHATTERED
AT THE SIGHT OF
DESOLATION!!!!!!!



Art:
 "A Very
 Sad Day"
 Natalia
 V. Evans
 (Saally)
 Scottsdale,
 AZ, USA

"No Time"

By Shelley "Silverwine"
 Sprecher - Hitch
 48 years old, MI



Survivor? Who me?
 Can't be that
 Not my reality
 To busy
 My own world
 Rushing through
 Don't need a shrink to cure
 A drink, yes that will do
 And a pill will go down too.

Survivor? Who, me?
 Why do you care?
 I'm getting by
 Shed a tear
 Don't know why
 Just the come down
 From the high

Survivor? Who me?
 Why should I care?
 I have this, my own family

Chemical cure to stabilize the brain
 Is that the fix all cure for staying sane?
 From wild child to repressed adult
 Sedate us all or just keep us on that happy pill,
 so dependent still
 Isn't there another way instead of
 the quick fix-it-all pill?

Self-destruction, anal repercussions and all that is
 really needed are to be
 looking for that chemical cure.
 Life wasn't what we truly expected
 because things didn't happen as were
 directed.
 Life had been destroyed in the blink of an eye
 Putting it back would be a miracle
 of such a surprise
 Chemical cures, it is happening
 everywhere around the world...

"I have been a writer for my own cause and therapy. It can be difficult to talk to people when you feel that you are just a bit off from others. I just feel way too much of those things that are around me. I love my all my children 4 plus 2. My peace I find now is in flower garden and walking my Shepard."

www.SilverWineAdditions.blogspot.com

Queen of Your Heart

By Angela Velazquez
Lutherville, MD USA



Angela Velazquez is a wiccan high priestess and has been a practicing witch for 17 years. She is a writer of short fiction and poetry and is currently working on her very first novel. You can find all of her writing at the link below!

The silently
sibilant
Snow falls quietly
in the forest
Pierced by beauty
I wait

The tress bend
Under the weight
of the snow
My heart echoes
yours

Falling in this
moment
Falling forever
Falling eternally
Falling always
Falling with you



Art:
"Spring's
First
Flowers"
Natalia
V. Evans
(Saally)
Scottsdale,
AZ, USA

www.MISTRESSCTHULHU.DEVIANTART.COM



WINTER'S NIGHT



By Benjamin Teurman (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

Snowflakes fall like drifting ash
Pale crystals down
To rest on frost-frozen earth
The falling snow muffles all sound
So that you can hear nothing
But the whistling
Of a cold wind
And the flutter of
The falling flakes
Bare trees stretch
Like skeletal hands
Reaching for a now distant sun
Stripped bare and weathered
By winter's wrath
Come spring they'll be resurrected
But for now they stand cold,
Lifeless
The freezing fingers of an icy gust
Brush against my raw red cheeks
Gentle, but coarse as sand
Caresses my frigid skin
Like a stinging kiss from
Winter's frozen lips
Glittering ice shines
Like gold diamonds
Under the dusky moonlight of
A long winter's night
The whole world seems to sleep
Under a blanket of pale snow.



Art:
"Insomnia"
By Natalia
V. Evans
(AZ, USA)

Poetry By Mimi Adams Matthews

Michigan native Mimi Adams Matthews is a poet and founder of Empowerment Cards, a branch of her motivational and public speaking venture, Passionista At Large. Her mission is to encourage and empower all who need it.

Reflections

*Upon opening the antique jelly cabinet
And smelling the warm, old wood,
I'm enveloped in satisfying memories and
An emotional connection with the
Family dishes that hold stories and conversations
Within their gold-rimmed edges
Just touching the worn wooden knob
Transports me through corridors of memories
To family dinners—
Holidays, birthdays, and summer celebrations.
Throughout the years, crystal, china, and cut glass
Have been sheltered by the old cabinet.
I still treasure lifting the pieces from its depths,
Feeling the weight of their history:
Satiny ivory wedding china, used for all "fancy" meals,
Great Aunt Opal's buttery-colored square dishes,
Lovingly packed and carried on the plane from Denver,
Fiftieth anniversary cut glass bowls
That celebrate precious years of love
And cradled cranberry sauce on holidays,
And the deep ruby red cake stand
That displayed our birthday cakes.
These fragile pieces became entwined with my own history
Before my life began.
A cabinet simply made of wood and glass,
But what it holds powerfully invokes memories
Of family gatherings enveloped in love.*



Grand Entrance

*Air so cold it burns my lungs
And brings tears to my eyes.
Footsteps crackle, steam is captured mid-rise.
Every twig, pine needle, and lacy weed
Is now encased in a fragile, frozen veil.
This prickly environment isn't particularly welcoming—
And yet, with soprano trills flowing,
A valiant, crimson cardinal is
Heralding the sun's hazy, golden arrival.
The shimmering orb's rising over the frozen enchantment
Dispels the mist,
And turns the purple-hued landscape into
A sparkling fairy wonderland
Of diamonds in abundance.
It's as if the cardinal's joyful announcement
Encouraged the sun to rise--
Where it danced across the slopes in splendor,
Making a dazzling and radiant
Grand entrance to the day.*



MIMI'S MAGICKAL
ANTIQUE JELLY CABINET



Art:
"Reflections"
By Stephanie
Pui-Mun Law
© 2010-2016

GET A BEHIND
THE SCENES LOOK
AT CREATING THIS
PAINTING [HERE!](#)



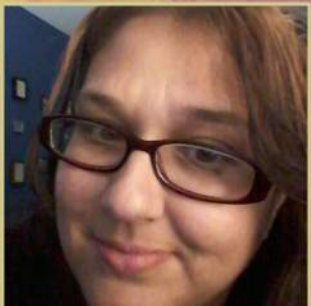
WWW.SHADOWSCAPES.COM

In quiet reflection
I find the truth
And accept this direction.
The love held dear
Will be a great afterthought
Since you're not here.
I gaze inwards at my soul,
Realize this is what matters,
Those reflections
Make me whole.



- MEET THE ARTIST -
STEPHANIE LAW

California artist, Stephanie Law is most recognized for her dreamscape-type illustrations which have gained notoriety from her published Tarot decks (Shadowscapes) by Llewellyn Worldwide and other various games and publications. Her work also regularly appears in Realms of Fantasy Magazine. She is very inspired by Surrealism and Nature which makes up her unique and dreamy style! Most of her work is done with watercolors, and she experiments with pen & ink, intaglio printing, acrylic, and digital painting as well!



- Renee Furlow (Texas, USA)
WWW.RENEEAVARDFURLOW.COM

Meet the Artist ...

Natalia V. Evans

Natalia V. Evans is the 24-year-old Scottsdale, Arizona native who has illustrated many of the diverse pieces throughout this issue! The Brazilian-born artist explains, "I do both traditional and digital art and you may notice I don't have a single solid style - I like change!" Natalia is currently attending Art School to help her grow into a style that is all her own. She is on her path to self-discovery and talks to Abra-zine! today to explain why self-reflection is so important as an artist!



AZ: Hi Natalia! How Long Have You Been Creating Art?

NE: I used to draw all the time as a kid, but I started taking art more seriously about 8 years ago (minus 2 years of not drawing at all because life) and I only started really studying (on my own) about a year ago.

AZ: Did you go to school for art?

NE: Kind of. This semester I started taking basic art classes at a community college to transfer some credits to ASU in 2017, hopefully, so I don't know if it counts yet.

AZ: How can you relate to the theme of reflection?

NE: This might sound (rightfully) cheesy, but I keep a little "reflections journal" and I make a point of writing in it about meaningful things I learn or experience, or just ideas and thoughts on life in general. This isn't something that comes naturally to me - I have to force myself because I believe reflection is essential in order to better oneself, and in turn, the world. Writing my thoughts after sitting and thinking for a while is what works best for me.

AZ: Why do you think it's important to take time to reflect back on our lives and our experiences as artists?

NE: Specifically as artists, I think reflecting on everything (everything!) can inspire us and make our art much richer. Every bit of who we are, and all of our experiences fuel our art, and if any part of that is left unexamined and underdeveloped, it will be wasted potential. I hope that makes sense! I think having new experiences is only half as good as reflecting upon them.

This is
how
Natalia
sees
herself
in her
Self
Portrait
Deviant ID!



AZ: Do you have a favorite song that makes you think of reflection, reminiscing, or make you nostalgic?

NE: Oh, I'm ridiculously nostalgic, so almost every song I love is nostalgic to me to some degree, and about a third of them make me sad! Since I have to pick one, the most powerful to me would be "Spider" by Oingo Boingo. So many feels!



Natalia's
Creative
Workspace!





MATT COOK 75

“Laughing on the Inside, Crying on the Outside”

ALBUM REVIEW BY JUSTINA CARUBIA

New Jersey based musician Matt Cook is the brains and creative force behind the piano-driven alternative band MC75, better known as Matt Cook Seventy-Five. The threesome, made up of Alberto Munoz (drums), Matt Cook (piano), and Matthew Pucci (bass), have just dropped their new full length album “Laughing on the Outside, Crying on the Inside”, this past fall. The band’s name takes a comical jab at their undeniable comparison and influence of the band Ben Fold’s Five. Regardless of similar sounding piano hooks and melodies, MC75 has evolved in a sound that has become all their own. If you listen a bit closely, it is evident that their personal style has truly evolved during the time they have been a band, and the maturity acquired through the experience of living and recording the songs, shines through in their emotionally charged, raw live recordings, produced by Avinash Patel (New Jersey).

The LIVE RECORDING approach is not an easy one, and could be quite a challenge for bands that don’t dedicate the time to hone their craft as a unit. This alone is proof enough that Matt Cook and the gang are actually quite seasoned and confident enough to get through whole takes of each song. There is no “punching in” or editing to manipulate the recording process with them. This organic and genuine approach sets them apart from most of the pro-tools and logic hacks we see out on the scene today. This in it of itself is a breath of fresh air and a nice break away from all of the processed smut crowding the mainstream airwaves.

The EP opens with the flow-y track, “So Called Love” who’s cascading piano riff takes you on an imaginative journey through its minute long intro before the lyrics paint a story about a lover burned, and a lesson learned. This album opener grabs the attention and eases the listener in nicely for the excitement about to come.

Track 2, “Glutton” is an upbeat tempo that contrasts the opening track quite nicely. The energetic toms are enough to get you moving on a gloomy day! Matt Cook infuses the song with a touch of whimsy as his Melodica key-flute and the doo-wop styled Oohs and Aahs of his band members carry you through the fast paced storyline, encouraging the listener to sing along and engage in the story being told. It is quite clear from the lyrical content that the tale of a lover’s woe is continuing through the material presented so far.

“Times Square” drops us back down on this seemingly roller coaster-like musical ride, thus far. Track 3 is a very groove and bass driven track, painting yet another imaginative visual picture for the listener right off the bat, through its waltz-y feel and jazzy urban vibe. The lyrical content makes me think of New York skylines and lovers strolling in central park on a cold winter’s day. There is a bit of a John Mayer “matter of factly” quality to Matt’s voice, melodies, and the way he delivers his story in this one. The piano solo in the bridge flirts with the drum hits and

comes back into a strong building last chorus. The choruses in this song are generally a bit darker and dissonant in association with the much lighthearted verses, but in a good way, which provides a nice build. In the transitions between the last chorus and ending, the bass chugging the song along to its final destination, gives me the visual of sitting in a NYC subway train. So far, this song paints the most vivid picture for me as the listener, and it is nice to feel like I am going along on this journey of experience and lessons learned by the musicians. The lyrics, "Fool Me Once, Shame on Me, Fool Me Twice, I Can Barely See..." are resonant of those very lessons. I look forward to learning the lesson in the next song...

"Patience" is a very slow ballad which is a nice switch-up from the first 3 tracks of the album as it is neither mid or high tempo. Through its sluggish pace, the simplicity of the song enables Matt's vocals to really shine here, and allows his listeners to experience his vulnerability firsthand. A combination of the lyrical content, the music, and woe in the vocals and melody emulates hints of loneliness and longing for emotional connection from someone who just might be emotionally unavailable. This song was a nice break from the previous tracks and invites the listeners to get a bit more up close and personal to the genuine emotion displayed by the artistry here. It's almost as if "Patience" was the lonely stroll that the audience has to take after getting off of our subway ride during "Times Square". It's like an interlude or quick break before picking back up again, on our journey that is this album.

"Vultures" comes in with a fast paced piano riff that has us traveling at a decent pace once again. We are back on that subway ride of emotion and conflict. The verses are slowed down and choppy as if we're hitting some bumps in the road but has us flying through the choruses as if we're passing through many stops in the journey. The lyrical content appears to display a push and pull or tug of war with a love interest that remains unresolved at the end of the song. There is clearly some disagreement going on with said love interest, but the song ends on "God I Love You So...". After all of the confusion experienced previously, our album protagonist that is Matt Cook, is still at conflict with his thoughts and emotions about this person who has obviously thrown him for a loop on this crazy subway train ride. This one is a fun one to listen to.

"Smokey Bear" is a very whimsical circus-y song with a Merry-Go-Round feel. The strings cascading through the background are a nice touch which sets this song apart from the rest of the album, but not in an inconsistent way. The strings are just a really nice element that the band has not used at all on the previous songs yet, so it was a really nice surprise. The lyrical content in this song displays that lessons are starting to be learned and applied at this point in the artist's journey.

"What have we learned... the pain we cause to ourselves, when will we change? I hope one of these days..." It's kind of nice to see self-realization and awareness, and admitting that both parties are at fault and responsible for damages done to their relationship. Even though they have not made any positive headway yet, the realization of the damages alone, is the first step in making that change. I think any couple who finds themselves in a conflicting situation can relate to this song. It might even be able to provide some insight.

"Laughing on the Outside, Crying on the Inside" is the album's title and last track. It seems appropriate to end the album on this note after an invaluable fable-like 12 song journey. The song has a classical ballad type feel which again showcase Matt Cook's vulnerable transparency. The song is a short and bittersweet finale at one minute and 38 seconds, which is almost anecdotal to the morals accumulated over the whole album and its process. Writing, arranging, recording, and putting together all the bells and whistles of an album is a very long and sometimes (most of the time) grueling process that comes with a lot of challenges. It is also a process that provides a lot of self-reflection, self-realization, and self-awareness. On this album, Matt Cook took us along for the ride and enabled his audience to learn some very valuable life lessons, right along with him. It is important as a songwriter to remain transparent because truth and authenticity are what is going to truly resonate with wide audiences. The band's music provides a wonderfully interesting backdrop for Cook's lyric-y life lessons and it is apparent that they are well on their way to really coming into their sound and putting themselves on the map.

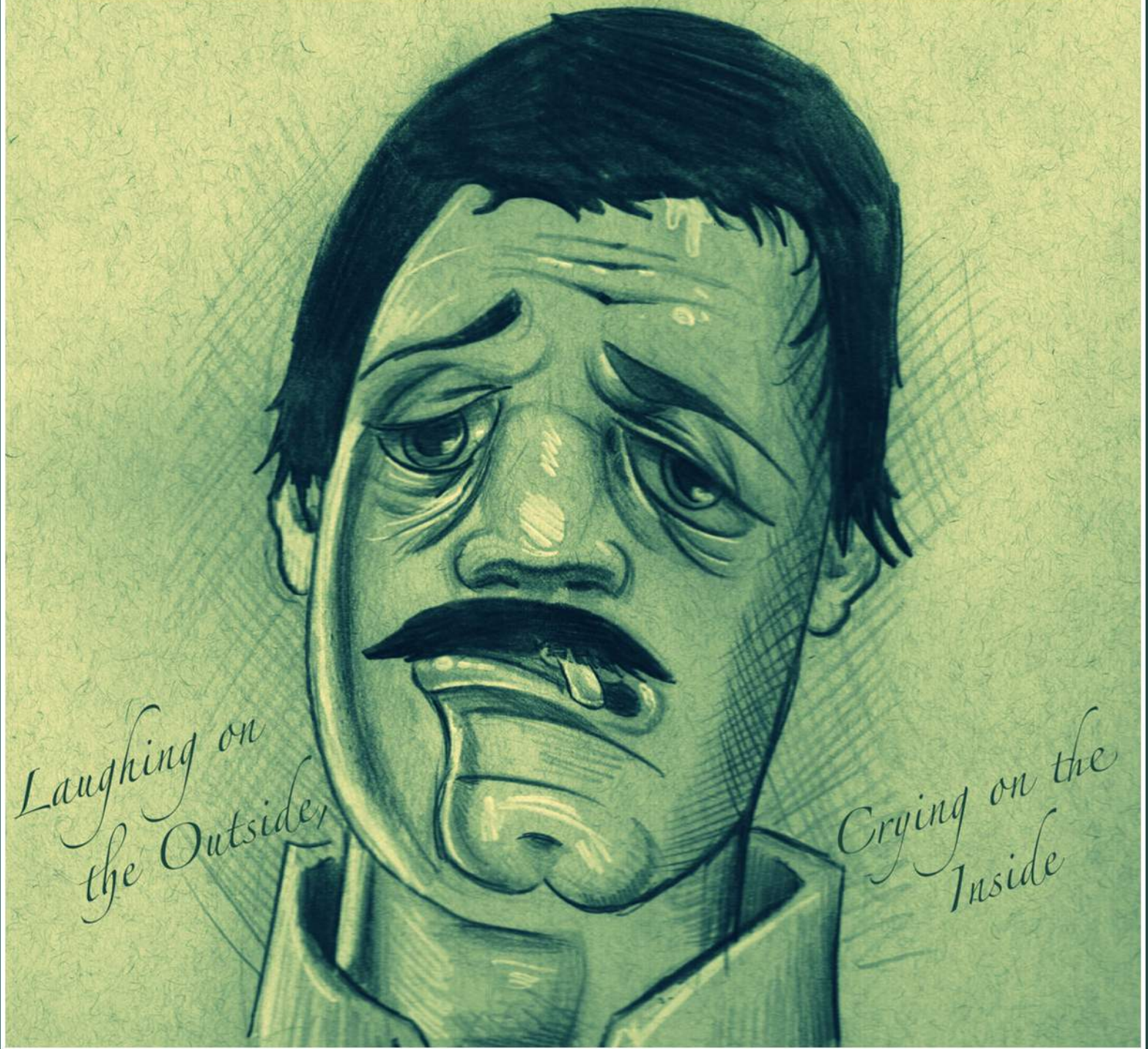
The only gripe I had about the whole album really, is that some of the lyrics are kind of hard to hear, and that could all come down to mixing and bumping the vocals up a bit as I feel the clarity gets lost in the instrumentation at times. Also, being conscious of enunciation and clarity of diction could aid in remedying this issue as well. Overall it's a great album, and if the band worked on their consistency of content and vocal clarity, they could be well on their way to being at the top of their game!

The band has already played a string of shows in the south and central New Jersey areas in efforts to support the album including notable venues such as The Court Tavern and Belmar Arts Center. They will be announcing some New Year Show Dates soon!

CHECK OUT THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ALL OF THEIR NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS!



MATT COOK SEVENTY-FIVE



DOWNLOAD NOW!



The Entity of an Artist



By Stefan L. Smith

Stefan L Smith studied Viola Performance at the University of Southern California and plays Section Viola in the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra in Los Angeles where he resides. He has made many notable appearances on HBO, NBC's The Voice and awards shows such as the VMAs and AMAs. He has played alongside Steven Tyler, Rihanna, and Jacque Lee (The Voice) just to name a few!



Whether it be graphical, musical, or physical, an artist has one idea in common. The passion that is manifested to create something that speaks to the world, which may be as quick as a blink of an eye or may last as long as centuries to come. However, the constant struggle of "am I creating/doing something worthwhile" tends to haunt us because of the plethora of milestones already accomplished by our predecessors and current artists.

In this issue of Abra-Zine, we were asked to focus on the topic of reflection, however that's a loaded word in my opinion. Are we speaking about prying into who we see ourselves to be in general, or basing it off of where we've come from and our present state? I like to think of reflecting at a more micro level. However, before we speak of my micro definition, I think it's important to define the macro.

My macro definition would be that of the reflection one must feel of their creativity overall. It's almost as if one is looking into a mirror. That "mirror" represents the overall makeup of the artist. Labels aside, it's what makes us fit into our socially assigned categories within our artistic realms. This arena can be somewhat damaging because of the ramifications set forth to "fit in" within a certain group of artists that are most familiar to our specific style. I am in no shape or form saying that individuality is not found here, but that the macro is the overall characteristic that defines us in our various mediums by society.

In my opinion, our "micro reflection" is where we see the most individuality in our growth as artists. I actually think of the micro as looking into a pond where you can see your own reflection. And when you look into your reflection in the water, your artistic efforts are those that disturb it. The ripples formed from your paintbrush, your instrument, manuscript paper, choreography and such show us the various makeup of our entity as artists. Each ring in the disturbed reflection, when combined, gives us a reflection that may be distorted but is also complete. When these rings dissipate, we are left with a deeper understanding of our overall growth as an artist. It is with this imagery that I suggest looking deeper within our micro reflection rather than fitting into the norm that defines our macro reflection to society.

As a professional concert/film composer and violinist/violist in Los Angeles, I am constantly challenged to create a macro reflection that places me into a package that is marketable and somewhat duplicate to my contemporaries. Not to say that it isn't allowed to be unique in the Los Angeles arts community, but some may stick out as a rebel. Being a rebel isn't a bad thing. We see in music this happened frequently, which paved the way for certain composers to be the "father" of their appropriate periods of music.

I think the key to becoming a legend is understanding and manifesting your strong and weak aspects of your craft by paying attention to your micro reflection. So as we enter a new year, I'd like to challenge everyone to perfect their craft by taking a look at the disturbance in your reflection, and using those aspects as a catalyst to create and enrich the human art form as a whole. I'd like to leave you all with one of my favorite quotes from one of the world's most legendary pedagogues and violin soloists that can be applied to any artist:

"Two things are necessary for a life in music: a clear idea of what you want to be, and the arrogance to pursue it. You can't walk onstage and say to the public, 'Excuse me, I'm here.'

You must believe in yourself and make immediately clear to everyone,

"I'm going to play. Listen!"

-Isaac Stern



Art:
"Acrylic
Forest
Love"
By Nicolas
Raymond
(Maryland, USA)

I Am Alijah



Alijah B. Yoshida
(San Diego, CA)

My name is Alijah Yoshida and I am female to male Transgender. I know a lot of people think that being transgender is something that is caused by your parents and the people you grew up around, but I can honestly say that is not the case. When I was about 5 years old I remember feeling like I really didn't belong to this body... like it just felt wrong, like it shouldn't be there. I remember feeling really uncomfortable and asking myself why I was like this. I know it sounds crazy that a 5 year old would be going through this and thinking these things but that's how I felt. I would pray every night before I went to sleep that God would make me "normal", and I would be so upset when I woke up the next morning in the same body, with the same feelings. I would go to my dad's house and come home completely happy, dirty and dressed like a boy with toy guns. I have always been the type of kid to worry about every single thing. I never did anything

without thinking about it first which is good because it kept me from running away when I was younger. It also kept me from killing myself even when I really wanted to. It also kept me from telling anyone how I really felt because I was worried that my family and friends would hate me. As I got older it did not get any better, in fact it got much much worse.

I hated myself everyday and my mom didn't understand what I was going through, so we weren't very close. I would lock myself in my room and I never wanted to do anything with the family. I just wanted to be left alone. Whenever my mom would ask me if I was a lesbian, I would always say no and pretend that I liked guys. I would put up posters of Zac Efron and other male celebrities and pretend that I wanted to be with them... but the truth was, I just wanted to be LIKE them. One day when I was 14, my mom found out that I did like girls. After that, I slowly started talking to girls in a way a guy would and when I was a freshman in high school I had my first girlfriend.

Alijah and
his mom
Gabby
(Simply
Gabrielle)



Now, sexual orientation and gender are two different things. There are transgender men and woman out there who are gay, but I was not one of them. I always hated shopping because I had to shop in the girl section, but I would always wear things that could still look like guy clothes. I was so depressed that I really considered killing myself, but I didn't because I knew it would hurt my family. I tried so hard to be what everyone wanted me to be but it wasn't who I was. I just hated myself for it!

Then one day, when I was in my sophomore year of high school (I was 16), I was cleaning my room and my mom walked in and looked at me and asked, "Marlena (that was my birth name), are you transgender?", and to this day I don't know what I was thinking or what came over me but I said, "Yes I am." After that I got my hair cut and

bought boxers and guy clothes and I was so happy! I lost some people, but the people who truly loved me stayed by my side and supported me. After I came out as transgender, me and my mom got very close. We have our shows and movies that we watch together and she's basically my best friend. My 3 older brothers don't understand, but they support me and they love me for who I am. I remember the first time my brother Rudi introduced me to a friend of his as his brother Alijah, and it was a great feeling. Now he talks to me about girls, borrows my shirts, and treats me like his little brother. I couldn't be happier. 2 years ago (I was 18) I started taking testosterone shots at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego with the help of the amazing transgender therapist Darlene Tando and my amazing doctor.


I still have days when I'm down, but everyone has those days. I can honestly say I've never been happier. I have a youtube channel, Username: Princenighthawk1 where I do vlogs sometimes and I also do videos about my life and beliefs about being transgender. I have learned not to worry about the opinions of others because no matter what, I have my family, my friends, and my god. Family is not always blood... family is the people that love you unconditionally. I do plan on legally changing my name and having both top and bottom surgery when I have the money. When I do get the surgery, I will probably cry of happiness!

My advice to any transgender person going through this is to just be who you are. You're going to lose people, but the ones who truly love you will stick by you, no matter what. Just remember that it's going to be hard for people to call you by a different name and a different gender at first, but it's not their fault. They are trying. Just have some patience. Also, don't worry about what anyone thinks of you. I always say that I don't like how black and white the world is with "gender roles" and what you can and cannot like. I love the twilight books (especially the gender swap one that just came out) and the Beautiful Creatures books. But, my preferences don't make me "girlie", it just means that I like good books. I also like basketball and action movies. My point is, don't be ashamed to say, "Yes I like this movie, song, or book..." Just be yourself and be proud of who you are. No matter what anyone says, I am a man and I always have been. I've just been trapped in the wrong body.

Art:
"Abstract
Acrylic Wall"
By Nicolas
Raymond
(Maryland, USA)

"LOVE YOURSELF"
-Alijah B. Yoshida





BECOMING WHO I'M MEANT TO BE

ART AND
MUSINGS BY
KIMBERLY
MCAFEE

Art:
"Goddess of
the Rose"
By Kimberly
McAfee

As I am writing this, it is November 2015. I'm feeling very content, and know I am on the right path; not exactly where I need to be, but definitely on my way. It's funny how much I've changed in the past few years.

In the not-too-distant-past, I was working a middle management position. Overtime was the norm, which I thought proved my "worth" to my superiors. I wanted to show I was committed, and that I was a model employee. I obtained a certification and was studying for another. I volunteered for projects. I put every fiber of my being into making myself better for this position, hoping that management would notice and further promote me. I was achieving, but it was never enough. I always focused on lack: what I needed to learn, what certification I needed next, what else I should volunteer for...it was exhausting.

I even put up with situations that I shouldn't have and justified it to myself as developing a thicker skin, which would help me should I rise higher in the ranks. It was actually just needless suffering. I was trying to live up to what I perceived everyone's expectations to be: my employer, my parents, my community, even society at-large. I was constantly stressed, my relationships suffered, and at one time, I even had to get an EKG because I was having frequent heart palpitations. I thought it was what I wanted, but I wasn't being truly honest with myself. I felt like being this super-professional person was what I was supposed to do, that it made me a respectable member of society. It was an empty existence.

I liken it to the popular Reddit post that's been making the rounds across social media: "TIFU My Whole Life: My Regrets as a 46-Year-Old, and Advice to Others at a Crossroad." To summarize this, it is basically about a man who has devoted himself singularly to work – much like how I did – and has completely missed out on his life: his wife is cheating on him, he has no real relationship with his son, he even missed his father's funeral and basically never truly went after what he wanted. This poor soul played it safe throughout his working life, and ended up doing all the things he didn't want to do...for 26 years. He abandoned his dreams and became a working drone.

I could have very well done the same. Fortunately, I'm no longer working at that job, and am focused on living a life that I'm truly proud of. My dream is to support myself completely through my writing. I've written for several magazines, am a Featured Author on a [political website](#), participated in a Flash Fiction competition, have started my own blog revolving around [Christopaganism](#), and am working on a book about my spiritual path as well. I have greatly enjoyed writing in all forms. Each genre has allowed me to explore a different side of myself. This variety has allowed me to express myself more fully than I ever have been able to before. Writing has literally been a Godsend. I can confidently say that I have found my calling.

If you are like I was, please take a moment to reconsider what is truly important in your life. Just like the gentleman from the Reddit post, you're playing safe with your life. You only have one, and you deserve to go after your dreams. Maybe you won't succeed but maybe you will, or maybe you'll try but stumble upon a completely different path that you love, etc. But you'll never know unless you try, and you won't have the regret of not knowing. Trying, whether you fail or not, gives you the luxury of knowing you gave it a go. It's never too late for a course correction. I'm not saying to do anything reckless, I understand that you may be married with children, have house payments, etc. However, you can still take reasonable steps toward something you love. For example, do you want to be an actress? Why not try out for local plays? You may find that is what truly soothes your soul.

So get out there. Try.
Become the person you're meant to be.



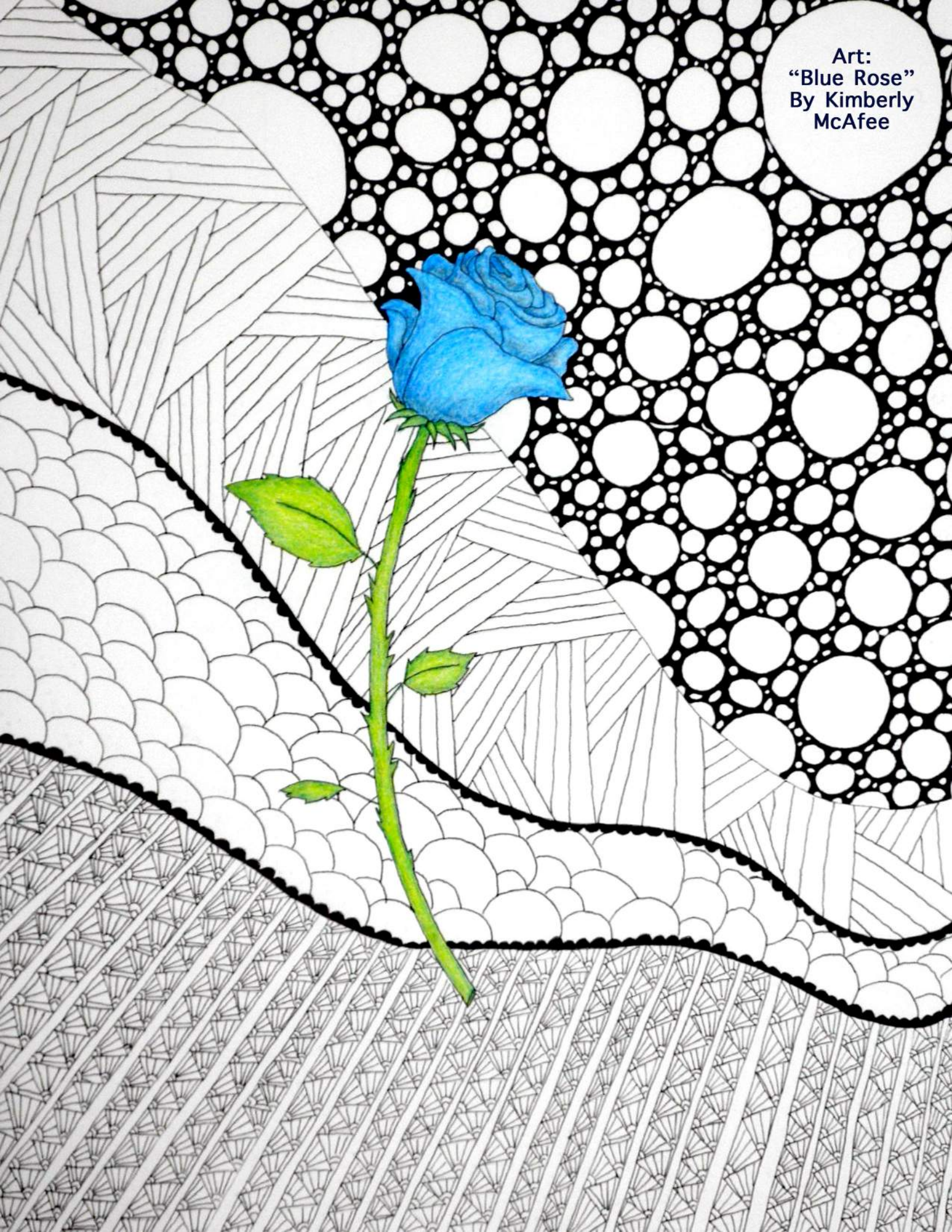
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Kimberly McAfee hails from Georgia, USA. You can read more of her opinions and musings on the following websites.

WWW.THESUNDAYSENTINEL.COM
WWW.CHRISTOPAGANKIM.WORDPRESS.COM

Art:
"Blue Rose"
By Kimberly
McAfee

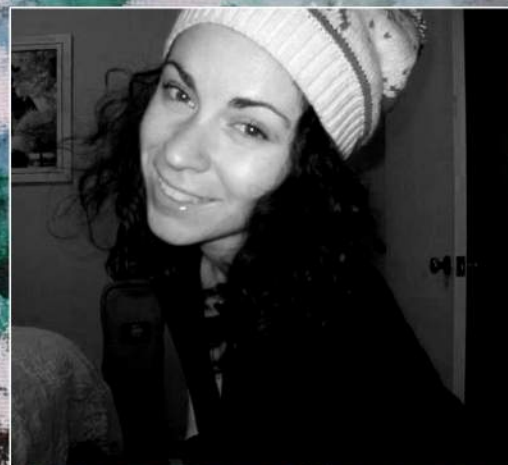


Living unsustainably and Finding Happiness in all the Wrong Places

By Nicole Lee Aguilar



Art:
"Winter
Landscape"
By Markus
Pitkänen
(Finland)



Nicole Lee Aguilar a health and wellness lifestyle blogger from San Francisco, California. She is passionate about teaching people how to live more balanced lives in mind, body, and spirit!

I moved to Los Angeles two weeks after I graduated college. I had no job lined up... just a dream. Luckily, most of my friends from film school were making the same move. I had a support system. Hollywood is everything you think it is. It's glamour and fun, but it's also tough and dark. Los Angeles catapulted me into a much needed lifestyle change. When I arrived, I was 160lbs of unhealthy, self-loathing ratchetness. I was a mess, but somehow, Hollywood pushed me into eating better and working out. I quickly realized that it was the anti-depressant I needed, but it also wound up being an addiction.

The pounds started falling off. When you go from barely active to hiking hours a day, this will happen. For the first time in my life, I was feeling great about my body. I had never been slim, but I was getting there... I was starting to get that Hollywood bombshell body and I wanted to keep going. Every so often, I would hit a plateau, and instead of switching up my workouts, I started eating less and less. Honestly, I didn't know any better. Eventually, I would hit 105lbs... and I still thought I had weight to lose. Unfortunately, I was at about 900 calories a day. Even then, I knew I couldn't go lower.

I was happy with the number on the scale and the number in my pants, but my naked reflection in the mirror wasn't what I wanted. Before I moved into producing, I had free time- free time that allowed me to workout 2-3 times a day. The good news was, I was eating more calories because I was always hungry, the bad news was I was overtraining. Other than overtraining, what I was putting myself through was not sustainable. I was getting the results I wanted, but as soon as I moved up the totem pole, I lost that extra free time and gained weight. Why? I wasn't getting my workouts in like normal and they eventually became non-existent. My proper nutrition turned into late night takeout at the office.

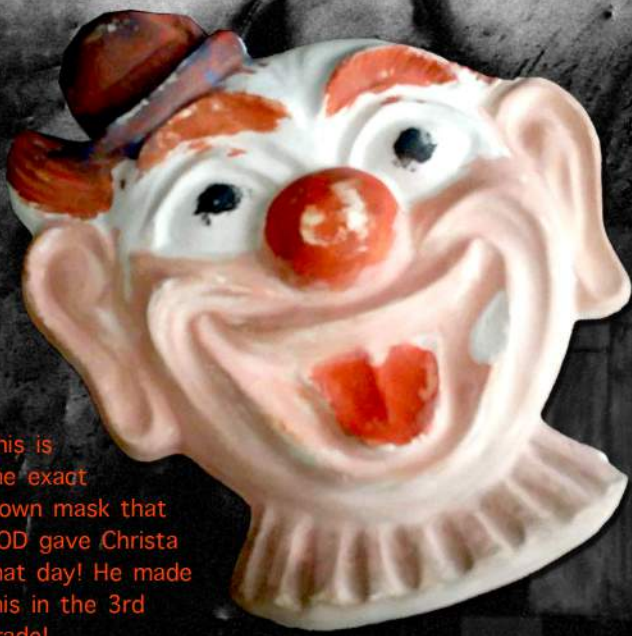
The couple years of changing myself were shot. I was mad at myself. The self-loathing and depression kicked back in, fast and furious. I wasn't a size 0-2 any more and my anti-depressant was no longer working out; it was food and sleeping whenever I could. Food is always a vicious cycle. Comfort eating only makes you feel good for so long, then you're mad at yourself for indulging afterwards. I didn't gain that much of my weight back, but it was enough to make me feel like I set myself back to zero.

When I was coming up with my article for this issue, I wanted to reflect on my own journey of finding health and happiness. While I still strive to find balance in my every day life, I can look back and understand that what I was doing was unsustainable and that finding happiness in my appearance was finding happiness in all the wrong places. Learning to find balance between your life and your health will always be a balancing act because when are our days the same?

Our days and our schedules are ever changing and we need to learn to adapt. Looking for happiness in the size of your pants or the number on the scale is not the right place to look. Almost two years later, I am still learning how to achieve health and happiness in what my life is right now. My workout schedule is not where I'd like it to be yet, but I will tell you that my happiness lies in the adventures I take, the sunsets I see each night off the Golden Gate Bridge, curling up in bed with the love of my life, and having two crazy fur babies. Ask yourself... is your lifestyle sustainable and does it truly make you happy? [If your answers are no, adjust!](#)



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THE DAY GOD GAVE ME A CLOWN MASK BY CHRISTA RIMMER

This is the exact clown mask that GOD gave Christa that day! He made this in the 3rd grade!



ave you ever had one of those chance meetings where you just knew, I mean like KNEW, something amazing, spectacular, or pivotal to your future was going to occur? That is what happened to me that Saturday – the day God gave me a clown mask.

It all started off innocently enough. I dropped my son off at his class, parked the car, scrolled through my phone for a bit, and thought, “Wow, I have an hour to kill.” Now, there is one thing about me that you must know. I love love LOVE books. I love how they look, how they are made, how they feel, and most importantly...how they smell. I love the smell of books. Not Barnes and Noble’s books, but the ones that have been through many hands and seen many lives. They are worn, and tattered, and bursting with the richness of old stories made new again. I, Christa Rimmer, am a book sniffer.

There is an old bookstore on Main St. that looked like it would satisfy my book-smelling fetish. I decided to use my hour to go take a whiff, or two, or ONE MILLLLLLLIONNNN. When I walked into the book store, I told myself I was not going to buy any more books. I was just going in to smell them and that was it. I was not disappointed. This is an old bookstore with real wood floors, bookcases to the ceiling, ancient tomes behind glass, and those old fashioned ladders on tracks. I wanted to climb up one and reenact the scene of Belle in the Beast’s library. “Little town filled with littllllle peoplllllle.” I know that’s not the song, but it’s my fave and a great song to sing to your teenagers. I walked around the store inhaling the sweet, sweet smell of books in all shapes and sizes. I found two that called my name and were clearly ready for the adoption option. I had them tucked under my arm and was perusing a clearance table, when I noticed a gentleman take a seat on one of the chairs at the end of an aisle. He sat there looking around, holding an unlit cigarette that he would occasionally put to his lips as if he was smoking. Suddenly, the Garfield book I was looking at became as fascinating as the lost works of Da Vinci. I was wearing my Goonies shirt, which is an automatic beacon for the strange and unusual, and was hoping I could just blend in with the Bobbsey Twins and Mrs. Piggle Wiggle, but nope. Not today. Not today.

He was saying something to nobody in particular and when I looked up he asked me if I read books. Was this a trick question? Was he a spy for one of my high school teachers that had guessed I had only read the first and last chapters of The Canterbury Tales? Why didn’t I wear my grown up shirt today? I politely said I did read books. I was starting to glance back down at Garfield eating another tray of carb laden, cheesy goodness, when the man looked me in the eyes and said, “I don’t read anymore. I just came in here to smell the books.” WHAT!?! I quickly glanced away dropping poor Garfield on the ground. What are the chances he would say that? This was it! SOMETHING AMAZING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN!!! I was ready. This was my pivotal moment when God would give me a message that would change my life forever. I was ready. I was open. I was like Scooby Doo...Aroo??? Everything in me was focused on this “cigarette-not-really-smoking” man. He then asked me if I knew who Doctor Who was. Sweeeet! My message was going to have something to do with time travel and killer angel statues. I was waiting for him to whisper “Don’t Blink”, but instead he just looked at me patiently. I told him of course I had heard of Dr. Who. He then asked me what Dr. Who was a doctor of.

Awww, C’monnnn. Just give me my message. Don’t make me work for it. He said, “He is a time...” “Oh yes,” I said, “A time lord.” He repeated after me, “He is a time lord. One lord with many faces.” At this point he pulls up his shorts and shows me the tattoo on the top of his thigh and says, “It says Lord of Lords. He is always the same Lord, but he has a different face and appears in different forms. Lord of Lords” Wait! God has a tattoo? Of course I was also thinking that it was probably safe to blink and I probably wasn’t going to get to time travel. He then said, “My time here is almost up. My journey is almost over. I am so happy because I am going to be going home soon.”

"I am going to die here and the last book I smelled was *Garfield*! What a cruel, cruel world."

Now, I can't lie. When he said that part, I immediately thought that he was on some book smelling mission to blow up the book store. I thought, "I am going to die here and the last book I smelled was *Garfield*! What a cruel, cruel world." I started to inch away down the aisle, when he asked me if I smoked cigarettes. I said that I didn't and he said that he hated the smell, but I would live forever if I smoked. I was certain this was not a PC thing for God to be saying to me, but I was still curious about this chance meeting and what it all meant, so I stuck around.

He asked if he could tell me a story. I told him that I was going to need to pick up my son soon and he said he could tell it in five minutes. He showed me the tattoo on his arm - Genesis 11:9. He said, "Genesis was an anagram for Gee Sins. The verse was about the tower of Babel: Man sinned and they were put into chaos. What is happening in the world now? Chaos. So much talking yet nobody understands one another. Nobody is communicating. Genesis." He then asked me what the ultimate chaos would be. I thought in my head a Kardashians in the white house, but on the outside I just shrugged. He said a series of events that makes everyone on the same playing field, a new world order. I was like, "No-no-no-nobody wants a new world order!" He said, "I'm going to bring a new world gift." Gifts are good.

He started to talk about numbers at this point, how he was born in Riverside, on this date, at this time, and three plus four equals seven and then my brain exploded. Numbers and conversations about numbers are just not my bag. I felt my brain start to wander off, questioning what the hell was going on, etc.

"Everything is on the computer. I want you to have it. Meet me...will you do that for me?" Wait what? What did he just say? What's going on? Meet??? WHAT? He repeated, "I have something for you. Will you meet me at the pink chair statue?" Say whaaaaat? Is this the new world gift? Pink chair statue? Was there a gas leak in here? Is this a sign of early menopause? I told him I had no idea where the pink chair statue was. He told me it was three blocks away, to finish what I was doing, and meet him there. He turned and walked away down the aisle. The scent of paper was now more of a bitter fear smell. The owner apologized for not getting to him and asked if he could help him. He said, "No, thank you. I found exactly who I was looking for" and he walked out. I went up to the counter to purchase my book. I asked the owner if he knew the man and he said, "No, don't you? He said he was looking for you." I said I had never met him before and wasn't sure what had just happened, but I was pretty sure he wanted to meet me at a pink chair for a computer. The owner just looked at me blankly. I'm pretty sure he thought I was a lunatic. He said, "He's crazy. Don't do it. Do you want me to walk you to your car?" He did in fact walk me to the car, which was parked right outside his shop.

I went to pick up my son and the second he was in the car, I immediately started to unleash a flurry of words from my pie hole. All that he heard was "computer..." Now, some background is needed here. I love crazy. I embrace it. The key to crazy, however, is that I instigate it. I talk to strangers, but I'm not particularly fond of them initiating conversation with me. It's diabolical. My son is my Jiminy Cricket. He is the voice of reason... usually. Not this time. He told me that he was intrigued. He also laughed ... a LOT. I was not scared-scared, but there was definitely fear present. I just knew that this was some sort of test. I drove down the street and there was the big, pink chair statue...all six feet of it, and there was my fellow book sniffer standing in front of it...with a shopping cart. I circled once, questioning what I was doing or even considering doing. I circled twice. I was telling myself, "If this is a test, you are failing. You say you want to help others. You say you want to have "coffee chats" with complete strangers. Well, here is your chance! Swallow that fear and get your ass in the game!"

I parked the car a block away. I had my son put 911 on speed dial and I walked toward the big, pink chair statue. He was gone! Yay!!! I live to see another day! Annnnd... then he walked out of the coffee shop with a plastic bag. He remarked on the perfect timing. He started to bag up the desktop computer. He handed me two books, one of which was signed by his professor at Harvard and the other, which had an alphanumeric code of some sort. He then reached down and handed me a..... ceramic clown mask. I couldn't help myself. I froze. My hand quickly pulled away when I saw what it was. Oh helllll no! A clown mask! He didn't catch the terror in my eyes. He proceeded to tell me that he had painted it at the Boys and Girls Club when he was in the third grade. He said he didn't know why because he didn't even like clowns. I think I mumbled something about being afraid of them. He made a motion like he was going to throw it and I reached out for it, yelling, "Nooooooooo!" I told him that I would take it. The name "Rich" was printed in bold letters across the back. Maybe this was a sign of future wealth?

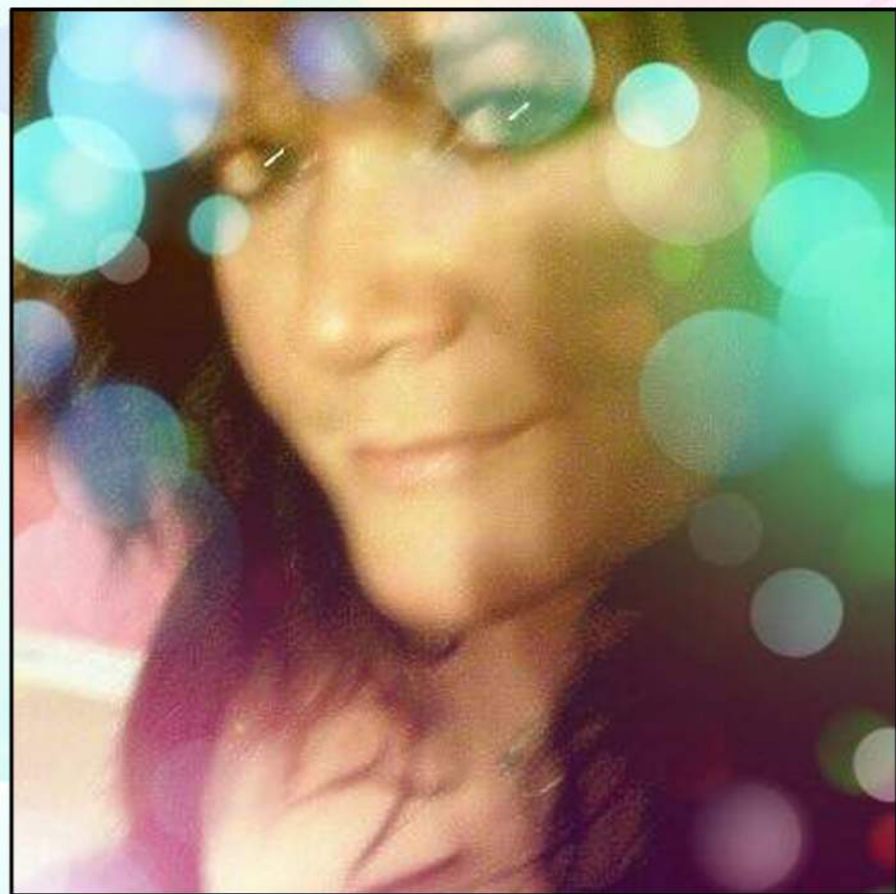
I told him that I had nothing to give him in return. I was humbled by his generosity and these items he had held onto for so long. He said to me, "I am going home soon and do not need these things. I am not homeless. I just pretend to be. I am Rich. I am thankful that I found you and you allowed me to give these things to you." I thanked him again and started to walk away. I heard him quietly say, "Thank you for believing in me." I got into my car and just drove. I was in a fog. What just happened? I have always believed in God. Always. I felt that if God was looking down on five people on Earth, I was one of them. I genuinely believe that I am like God's entertainment. We get each other. He knows I am totally out of control and loves me anyway and I know that He thinks I am hilarious. He enjoys my wit and humor and laughter. I know that there is a heaven channel just for me. I also know that He has a funny sense of humor when it comes to me. I would not have spoken with my new friend if he had not mentioned coming in to smell the books. I would have continued to question the whole encounter if I had not received the clown mask. A freaking clown mask that was like 30 years old! C'mon! The moment I felt that mask in my hand, I knew that it was God. Only God would make sure I heard His message by giving me a friggin' clown mask.

Of course, clarity did not happen straight away. It took a little over a week. I have been hesitating on stepping out completely into my own business doing hypnotherapy, blogging, periscoping, etc. I wanted more financial freedom, but I was stuck. Up until yesterday, I was a full time travel agent. As a single mom raising my son and my niece, I could not just willy-nilly quit my job. I did not have anything to fall back on. I had no idea how to even make it work. Then yesterday, a little over a week from the bookstore incident, I was let go from the company that I worked for. THAT is fear. I am suddenly thrust into my worst nightmare. Panic and fear are strange bedfellows. By strange, I mean that they thoroughly suck. It has been twenty fours since it happened and I finally realized what all of this means.

Last week, I talked to a stranger about Dr. Who, I met a man at a giant, pink statue chair, I defused a desktop computer that might have been a bomb, I conquered the clown mask, and... I survived. I made it. God knew how I was stuck in fear. He knew how much it took for me to step out of my comfort zone. He wants me to have faith and He is thankful for my belief in Him. Life is not easy. It is not always rainbows and unicorns. Many times we will need to wipe the dust off our ass and get back up. Some days will just suck and some days will be absolutely magical. I know that everything will work out.

I know... because God gave me a clown mask...

Christa Rimmer lives in Mesa, Arizona where she attends SWIHA (Southwest Institute of Healing Arts). She is a Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist, Certified Life Coach, and Certified Aromatherapist. She uses a variety of techniques along with compassion and humor to assist her clients in overcoming obstacles, reducing stress, finding relief, and achieving a more balanced and meaningful life. Christa is also a voice actor and had her breakout role playing the voice of Chuckie's girlfriend Megan, on RUGRATS in the episode "Cradle Attraction" (1994). She is currently working on creating more content for her blog where she hopes to continue posting funny stories from her crazy life experiences!





THE 6 OF CUPS: CARD OF NOSTALGIA

BY JUSTINA CARUBIA

nos·tal·gia

noun

1. A sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.

Tarot is a great tool for personal development. I always like to say that I use the tarot to “DESIGN” the future, rather than predict it. It is through a tarot spread where we can see the map, or layout of this system designed to give us the answers to which we seek. I also like to think that a road map is useful and can tell us how to get from point A to point B, BUT it is ultimately useless if we decide to not get in the car, and GO! Tarot provides us with insight, but it is up to us, in the end, to create any change or outcome to any given situation. The card we will be discussing today will be the 6 of Cups. If you are a Cartomancy geek like me, then you would also associate the suits of the tarot, with that of a deck of regular playing cards. The cups aligns with the suit of HEARTS. This suit carries the energies of love, emotion, intuition and just like the emotions of the human spirit, we are watery, never stable and always changing.

In this card in particular, we see an adult giving a cup of flowers to a child. So what does this mean when we see this card in a spread, exactly? Well this could all depend on the other cards that we see around it. When reading the tarot intuitively, it is important to take note of the position of the card, the cards around it, and also anything else that sticks out to us in the card. We should look at colors, which ones pop out at you? Take note of the sky... is it clear or cloudy, and what kind of tone is it mentally setting for you? Look at foreground and background, is it flat land, do the figures have stable footing, or are they standing upon rocky ground? Is the rocky ground in the distance? What kind of structures are in the photo?

We can take all of these things into account, and I will get into some of those specifics in a moment, but first I want to get into the overall general message of this card. The 6 of Cups is all about the past. It can indicate maybe an attachment to something, or a challenge in knowing when to let go of something that no longer serves you. Often we find ourselves rehashing memories of a better time, and we place ourselves in that time, mentally, even though we know things are no longer that way. This can create a sense of “stuck” for us. Maybe even for some of us, these attachments can date all the way back to our childhood. Maybe we grew up becoming programmed by the thoughts and limiting beliefs of those all around us. We don’t even realize that we have become shaped into what others told us was right, until we become adults and are awakened on our own accord.

These limiting beliefs can carry over with us into our adult lives, and if we don’t nip those negative habits and beliefs in the bud, they can even influence our relationships, whether it’s with love, romance, money, body image, career, etc., in a negative way. These beliefs can even create blockages for us. Now back to the imagery in the card. Now in this card, we see the structure in the background, we see the figures firmly planted on stable ground. This could indicate a level of comfort or “set in one’s ways”. In tarot, the suit numbers are not so directly related to numerology but hold the energy level, moreso. For example on a scale of 1 - 10, 1 being the beginning, 10 being the end, I see a 6 as somewhere in the middle. In direct correlation with this card and the overall meaning, 6 could represent that this figure is kind of caught between the worlds of child and adulthood.

If this card comes up in your spread, pay attention to the cards around it. Maybe it is suggesting that a certain area needs urgent attention in letting go of something. It is time to really reflect on your life, acknowledge negative patterns and try to shift your way of thinking and actions you are taking, so that you can really break free, and live the life you truly wish to live!

READ MORE TAROT TALK ON JUSTINA’S TAROT BLOG: WWW.JUSTINASWORLD.COM/TAROT-JOURNAL
CONTACT ME FOR A TAROT READING AT INFO@JUSTINASWORLD.COM

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Some of our readers tell us their most heartwarming childhood winter stories!



Art:
"Let it
Snow"
By
Natalia
V. Evans



"In the first recession of the early 80s, lots of people lost their jobs, including my father. We fished the pumpkins out of the garbage for food and deer hunting supplied us venison to eat. Christmas was just around the corner. The week before Christmas our luck was about to change. My dad got a call for a new job. Christmas came with 3 kids getting up later than usual because we were told to stay in our rooms. Odd, but I thought it was just because there would be nothing in the living room because we did not even have a tree. When we were able to go out I was shocked to see the floor was filled. The tree we didn't have, was now there. There were gifts all over the floor, more than we had ever seen. Our stockings were overstuffed and not just with nuts and fruits. The community of neighbors brought us 3 baskets of food, toys for my little brothers, I got a doll I had always wanted, board games and new clothes we so very much needed. For thinking there would be nothing, this was amazing. The value of community saved the miracle of Christmas for two young boys that year. It made a lasting impression on me and we didn't have to have pumpkin and venison for dinner for at least a week." - *Shelley Sprecher-Hitch (Almont, MI)*



"I remember being homeless for 3 weeks. It was my first car and I wasn't living at home. I was probably 24. I was in a fight with my mom. I was headed to Starbucks and it started snowing. It never snows in Columbus Georgia. Never. I was driving a Honda 1999 I had bought with my childhood savings. Now, this car had been through a lot, travels from ying to yang. It stopped. In the middle of the road. Traffic. This car just stopped, by a hospital and a mile from Starbucks. It was packed with warm clothes, I had a little money, and it had warm AC. I DIDN'T GET IT. IT WASN'T RUNNING. I pulled that car into the parking lot and stayed there for 3 weeks. I went to Starbucks everyday. They eventually towed my car and I never went to get it from the impound. My phone was disconnected, but my mom and I made up. She didn't know I was homeless until she read it in a story..." - *Darius Conway (Columbus, Georgia)*



"I'm one of those weirdos that calls into UFO radio shows and has subconscious memory impressions of being put into the womb from somewhere else. I remember thinking I was an alien and that I could literally fly if only I could remember how. I was born in December, though I was conceived in Central NY so I imagine it was still winter the previous April." - *Ryan Wilson (Rochester, New York)*



"I remember the year I desperately ("jogging in the desert with no water"-desperate) wanted Care-a-Lot. It was the home of the Care Bears: Tenderheart, Goodluck Bear, and Funshine Bear. The bears could slide down a cloud from the second to first floor. There was a lookout star telescope. The whole thing looked magical. I was the youngest of eight kids and a 40 dollar item ate up the majority of my Christmas List funds. I didn't care though because I wanted it so much. Christmas morning came...and there was Care-a-lot in this big box. I was so excited!!! I tore open that box and there before my twinkling eyes did appear: 100s of pieces, stickers, and no bears. After two hours, the stickers were all crooked and bumpily placed, the table wouldn't stay up, and the stupid cloud kept turning sideways so my Smurfs (because the ten bears on the box were not included) kept falling to their non-Carebear doom. In the commercial they went down the slide on their own, could ring the bell, and fit in the damn chairs. While my brother rode around on his new bike, I sat there with my heart-shaped "sucks-a-lot". Moral of the story- be an only child." - *Christa Rimmer (Mesa, AZ)*



"I remember getting our first dog, "Bibe", during the blizzard of 96'. My dad had to dig trenches in 6 ft of snow for her to be able to get around the backyard. From that year on, she ALWAYS loved snow and I think of her anytime I see big snow mounds." - *Nicole Aguilar (San Francisco, California)*



Supporting Our Homeless Veterans



By Darius Conway



THE VETERANS NEED OUR EMPATHIC HEARTS AND SERVICE!



The roles have been reversed for many retired military officials. Our veterans need our assistance to be guided back to what they may use to know or what they need to know. Things in the world have changed for the good and the bad. Change is evident in this fast paced society of the human race. With time, let's not

forget about the many men and women who have risked their lives, given up their time, and do not get paid the rates most people assume, all to protect and serve the people, you and I.

Here is a chance to serve, donate, volunteer, or just share the message. There are many medications out in the world to help with the many things we face mentality and physically as humans. What medications do not remedy, are the struggles we may encounter in our lives and how to cope with them. How do we stop de-motivating ourselves? How can we bring our soldiers back to a life, full of natural teachings that will ensure a great future filled with hope, faith, self-motivation, jobs and 'real health'? There is a program in the deep 'dirty south' that has jumpstarted a holistic approach for many veterans that face PTSD, depression, or transition. These traumas have kept many of our heroes from being welcomed back into the world peacefully.

STAG VETS INC, is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization that is dedicated to providing the best care and treatment plan for veterans who are homeless, in need, suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). The Program focuses on rehabilitation, reintegration, teaching and rekindling the strength to achieve greatness that is at the core of the (STAG) philosophy. Understanding that every veteran who is homeless and in need, may feel that they lack the intestinal fortitude to achieve greatness. They ensure that every veteran who comes through their program, will find the strength in themselves to do something great again. They maintain a structured, friendly, creative learning work environment that respects diversity Ideas and hard work.

Our veterans all around the world do not deserve to be homeless, sick, depressed, or lonely with no help. From when the towers went down on 9/11/2001 in New York City to the recent end of the year Paris Terrorist Attacks on 11/13/2015, our armed forces protect and serve. Now it is the time to save our people and HELP. Helping the best way we can thank those armed forces who have protected us throughout our lives. From the cat stuck up in the tree in a suburban neighborhood, to the war on terror, help your veterans all around, near and far.

You can donate, volunteer, or reach out to STAG VETS INC Headquarters in Columbus/Fort Benning, Georgia by going to www.stagvetsinc.org or contacting L. Jonathan Jackson- Founder/President of STAG VETS INC. via the sites contact section.

Giving Back and Reflecting on OUR VETERANS.

Thank You,
Darius Darioncé Conway
DariusConway@gmail.com
www.DariusConwayInc.com



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Yosemite National Park

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S CALLING TO THE WILD BY KIMBERLY AREND-PORTER

THE BUCKET LIST. A WHERE-TO-GO LIST. WHATEVER ONE WANTS TO CALL IT, WE ALL HAVE SOME PLACE THAT CALLS TO US TO TRAVEL TO OR PURSUE SOME KIND OF FULFILLMENT BY VISITING. I HAVE BEEN PULLED TO YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CA. WHY? WELL, FOR ONE, THE TALL MOUNTAINS AND HILLS HAVE BEEN BEAUTIFULLY SCULPTED THROUGHOUT TIME, AND THEN THERE'S THAT CRISP AIR THAT CAN HIT YOU THROUGHOUT THE YEAR! IT LITERALLY IS A BREATHER OF FRESH AIR! THE REDWOOD TREES ARE LINED UP ALONG THE PATHS, SHAPING THE MEADOWS, AND THE LAKES ARE CRAFTED BY NATURE TO REFLECT THE BEAUTY IN THE PARK. THE STUNNING TRANQUILITY SPEAKS TO EVERYONE WHO DRIVES THROUGH THOSE PARK GATES.

I AM FROM NEW JERSEY WHERE WE HAVE SIMPLE MOUNTAINS THAT GO THROUGH THE STATE, BUT NONE THAT ARE LIKE THOSE THAT PEAK THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA. AS A PHOTOGRAPHER, I HAD A DESIRE TO PAUSE AND REFLECT AT THE MOMENTS WHERE THE VIEW AND THE SILENCE OF THE MOUNTAINS TRULY SPOKE TO ME. I WAS BOTH STUNNED AND MOVED FROM THE OUTSIDE, IN. I HAVE ALWAYS DREAMT OF THOSE MAGICAL SPOTS WHERE THE MOUNTAIN RANGE IS REFLECTED OFF THE WATER, PAIRED WITH SKIES THAT TAKE YOUR EYES, ENABLING YOU TO GET LOST IN THE MOMENT. YOSEMITE AREA DID JUST THAT AND MORE.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK WAS CREATED IN 1890. FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, THE VALLEY WAS THE HOME OF THE ANWANNEECHEE NATIVE AMERICANS. THE HISTORY OF THE AREA IS PROFOUND. I HAVE ALWAYS HAD A CONNECTION TO THE SPIRIT OF THAT LAND AND FOUND THE HISTORY OF THE LOCATION FASCINATING IN GENERAL. WHEN I DROVE THROUGH THE GATES OF THE PARK, I HAD STOPPED A FEW MILES UP THE ROAD. THAT WAS THE MOMENT THAT I WALKED OUT WITH MY CAMERA, HELD IT CLOSE TO MY HEART, AND THEN CLOSED MY EYES. I HAD CHILLS UP AND DOWN MY BODY, AND I FELT PEACEFUL. I WAS OVERWHELMED BY THE CLEAN AIR, THE GENTLE BREEZE, SENSE OF HISTORY, AND JUST COULDN'T HELP BUT TO THINK "AA, I AM HERE! THIS IS IT!"

WHEN I POSITIONED MY CAMERA, I OPENED MY EYES TO TAKE THE PICTURE. IT CAME OUT EXACTLY AS I WANTED IT TO. THE SKY WAS GLORIOUS, THE MOUNTAINS WERE BREATHA-TAKING, AND EVEN THE WATER TOLD ME A STORY. I WILL ALWAYS BE A TRAVELER, AND THE MOMENTS THAT I HAD IN YOSEMITE WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN. IF YOU ARE EVER FEELING PULLED TO A DESTINATION, AND YOUR CONNECTION TO IT HAS YOU FIXATED FOR REASONS YOU CANNOT EXPLAIN, JUST REMEMBER TO BE ADVENTUROUS AND MAKE IT A POINT TO EMBARK ON OUR OWN PERSONAL JOURNEY. YOU WILL BE SURPRISED ABOUT THE PERSONAL JOY AND FULFILLMENT THAT IT FILLS YOU WITH. JUST REMEMBER, THROW THE WORDS "BUCKET-LIST" OUT. REPLACE IT WITH "JUST DO IT".



"Half Dome"



KIMBERLY AREND-PORTER

Kimberly Arend-Porter is a New Jersey born free spirit who now resides in Fort Drum, New York. She is the proud mother of 3 little ones and wife to her military husband. While she is not playing mama bear to her little cubs, she revels in her passion for photography, not only as a hobby, but professionally specializing in Lifestyle, Event and Portrait images. She has done many weddings, and has also become infamous for her "Homecoming" shoots, where she reunites Army Wives and families with their husbands/fathers who have been away servicing their country. Kim is dedicated to making a relaxing, custom, and personal experience for all of her clients, and she is always paying close attention to the little details that make each moment of life that much more special! She started up her side venture K.P. Expressions Photography and she really hopes to be able to move to Florida, where she'd like to expand her client base! Do you live in the Watertown, Fort Drum area of NY? Contact Kim to book your shoot today!

WWW.KPEXPRESSIONSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



ART:
"EIFFEL
TOWER"
By LEONID
AFREMOV
(MEXICO)

**BUY ON
CANVAS!**



AN EXERCISE IN HEALING

WOUNDED WORLD WORKSHOP

By JUSTINA CARUBIA



Jean Jullien is the artist behind the "Pray for Paris" logo which went viral after the attacks on Paris.
[WEBSITE](#)

ON NOVEMBER 13, 2015, I ENGAGED IN SOME ACTIVITIES THAT ARE TO BE EXPECTED FOR SOMEONE MY AGE. I WENT TO A NEARBY CITY FOR A NIGHT ON THE TOWN WITH MY LOVER. FIRST WE PLANNED TO GRAB SOME DINNER AT A DOWNTOWN HOTSPOT FOLLOWED BY A MUSIC SHOW HEADLINED BY ONE OF OUR LOCAL BANDS. IT WAS A TYPICAL NIGHT UNLIKE ANY OTHER. OUR DINNER CONSISTED OF SOME GOURMET HOT DOGS AND TWO FREE CHEESECAKE DESSERTS COURTESY OF THE RESTAURANT IN EXCHANGE FOR OUR VOTE ON WHICH ONE WAS THE BEST. WE COULD OPTIONALLY DONATE ANY AMOUNT WE'D LIKE AFTER PARTICIPATING, AND ALL PROCEEDS AFTERWARD WOULD GO TO A LOCAL SHELTER AND PROVIDE FOOD FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE ON THANKSGIVING. WE GOT A FREE DESSERT, DONATED A SMALL AMOUNT AND HELPED THE LESS FORTUNATE, IT WAS A WIN WIN. THEN MY BOYFRIEND CHECKED HIS PHONE, TO WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA HAD ALERTED HIM THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN ACT OF TERRORISM IN PARIS, FRANCE. NOT MUCH HAD BEEN KNOWN YET AT THIS POINT, OTHER THAN THERE WAS A SHOOTING AT A SOCCER STADIUM, OR SOMETHING TO THAT NATURE. IT IS HARD TO REMEMBER WHAT MY REACTION HAD INITIALLY BEEN. WE AS A SOCIETY HAVE UNFORTUNATELY GROWN SO ACCUSTOMED TO THESE OCCURRENCES, AND THE ONLY WAY TO REALLY GET THROUGH THE NAGGING FEAR OF WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAPPEN WHEN YOU STEP FOOT OUTSIDE YOUR FRONT DOOR, IS TO BECOME HARDENED BY IT. WE HAVE NATURALLY BECOME SUSCEPTIBLE TO BRUSHING IT OFF AND APPLYING THIS "LIFE GOES ON" MENTALITY, MORE AND MORE WITH EVERY TRAGEDY. I CHOSE TO BRUSH IT OFF MYSELF, AND NOT LET THIS NEWS FILL THE REST OF MY NIGHT WITH WORRY. I THINK WE BOTH DID. WE PAYED THE CHECK AND THEN PROCEEDED TO THE MUSIC VENUE. AS THE NIGHT WENT ON, WE ENJOYED THE MUSIC OF ALL THE BANDS THAT HAD PLAYED AT THIS VENUE THAT I HAD PRACTICALLY SPENT A GOOD CHUNK OF MY OWN YEARS PLAYING IN BANDS AT. AROUND THE TIME OF THE LAST BAND, I HAD GOTTEN THE TEXT FROM A FEW FAMILY MEMBERS AND ALSO A FRIEND WITH MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE TRAGEDY IN PARIS, AND TELLING ME TO BE CAREFUL WHEREVER I WAS. I HAD STILL NOT KNOWN TOO MUCH ABOUT THE DETAILS, BUT THEIR WORRY CAUSED ME TO WORRY MORE. THIS WAVE OF UNEASINESS CAME OVER ME, AND I REALLY COULD NOT WAIT TO JUST GO HOME.

AS MY BOYFRIEND AND I GOT HOME, WE SNUGGLED UP IN BED TO CATCH UP ON ALL OF THE NEWS WE HADN'T BEEN TOO INFORMED OF THROUGHOUT THE DURATION OF OUR NIGHT OUT. I THEN STARTED TO SEE NEWS ABOUT HUNDREDS BEING MURDERED AT A CONCERT HALL. WAIT A MINUTE, I THOUGHT THIS WAS AT A SOCCER STADIUM? NOT THAT IT MATTERS WHERE IT HAPPENED, BUT NOW THAT ONE OF THE TARGETS SEEMED TO BE YOUNG PEOPLE JUST LIKE MY BOYFRIEND AND I, HAVING A NICE EVENING FILLED WITH GOOD FOOD, LIVE MUSIC, AND OTHER SOCIAL THINGS PEOPLE MY AGE GENERALLY ENJOY ABOUT LIFE, NOW IT JUST HIT A LITTLE TOO CLOSE TO MY HEART. APPARENTLY THE SHOOTINGS HAD ALSO TAKEN PLACE AT CAFES, AND PEOPLE WERE SHOT WHILE DINING ON STREET TERRACES. IT SEEMED LIKE AN EPIDEMIC OF HATRED HAD BROKEN OUT IN THE CITY OF FLASHING LIGHTS, EXCITEMENT, INSPIRATION AND ROMANCE. THIS WAS A CITY FILLED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE SEEKING THEIR OWN ENJOYMENTS OF LIFE, AND IT JUST DIDN'T SEEM FAIR. SEEING THE NEWS OF THIS ATTACK WHERE HUNDREDS HAD BEEN KILLED, LITERALLY MADE MY STOMACH TURN. YOUNG ADULTS, AND EVEN LOVERS, JUST LIKE MY BOYFRIEND AND I, WHO WENT OUT FOR A NIGHT ON THE TOWN, OUT TO DINNER, TO A CAFE, TO SEE THEIR FAVORITE BAND, NEVER MADE IT HOME TO THEIR SAFE WARM BEDS. I SAT THERE IN SHOCK, NEWS STORY AFTER NEWS STORY, TRYING TO PIECE TOGETHER WHY ANYONE WOULD WANT TO DO THIS TO OUR HUMANITY. AND IN THAT MOMENT, THE ROUGH EXTERIOR THAT I HAD IN PLACE DUE TO THE INFLUX OF RECENT RACIAL WARS, POINTLESS POLICE BRUTALITIES, PUBLIC SHOOTINGS, OTHER HATE CRIMES, AND THE ALL TOO CLOSE TO HOME 9/11 ATTACKS, HAD JUST CRACKED. I FELT COMPLETELY HELPLESS AND HURT FOR THOSE POOR PEOPLE. I CRIED, HELD MY BOYFRIEND, AND JUST THANKED GOD AND THE UNIVERSE FOR ALL THAT I HAVE IN MY LIFE, BECAUSE IT COULD LITERALLY BE TAKEN AWAY AT ANY MOMENT.

OVER THE COURSE OF THE NEXT FEW DAYS IT HAD BEEN MADE MORE PUBLIC THAT THERE HAD ALSO BEEN ATTACKS IN BEIRUT, BAGHDAD, AND ALSO AN OLDER STORY ABOUT AN ATTACK IN KENYA HAD RESURFACED. PEOPLE HAD STARTED ARGUING ON SOCIAL MEDIA ABOUT WHICH OCCURRENCE HELD THE MOST WEIGHT, AND ALL SORTS OF OTHER DIFFERENT ANGLES CONCERNING THEM ALL, WHICH I WILL NOT GET INTO HERE BECAUSE YOU HAVE PROBABLY ALREADY SEEN IT ALL ON YOUR OWN NEWSFEED, AND ALSO THAT IS NOT REALLY WHAT THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT. I SPENT THE PAST FEW DAYS IN A FUNK, JADED, GETTING SUCKED INTO THE CHAOS AS ALL OF HUMANITY HAD SEEMED TO GO UP IN ARMS, SPREADING THEIR HATE-FUELED OPINIONS TOWARD ONE ANOTHER. IT REALLY LEFT ME DISGUSTED WITH THE WORLD AND FORCED ME TO RETRIEVE AND BE ALONE WITH MY THOUGHTS. AND THOUGHTS THERE WERE MANY. THOUGHTS LIKE "I NEVER WANT TO LEAVE MY HOUSE AGAIN, I NEVER WANT TO TRAVEL AND SEE ALL THE BEAUTY THE WORLD HAS TO

OFFER, I NEVER WANT TO DO THE THINGS I ENJOY IF IT REQUIRES ME TO BE IN A PUBLIC SETTING, OR - PROCREATING IS POINTLESS IN A WORLD THAT IS APPARENTLY GOING TO SHIT, WHO WANTS TO RAISE A CHILD AROUND ALL THIS HATE?" ... AND THE FEARFUL THOUGHTS GO ON AND ON." AND WHILE I KNOW THAT INSTILLING FEAR AND CAUSING A DIVIDE AMONGST ALL OF HUMANITY IS EXACTLY WHAT THESE ASSHOLES WANT, IT DOESN'T MAKE THINGS ANY LESS TRAUMATIZING, EVEN IF WE HAVE NOT BEEN SUBJECTED TO THE ACTUAL EVENTS, OR HAVE NOT BEEN DIRECTLY TIED TO ANYONE WHO HAS.

YOU SEE... WE ARE SUFFERING AS A SOCIETY. WE HAVE ALL ADAPTED TO THIS SENSE OF WALKING PTSD, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF US WHO ARE OF THE EMPATHIC NATURE, WHO FEEL THINGS LIKE THIS SO VERY DEEPLY THAT IT TAKES EVERY OUNCE OF OUR BEING JUST TO GET OUT OF BED THE NEXT DAY AND FUNCTION. SOME OF US MAY EVEN FEEL A CERTAIN SENSE OF "SURVIVOR'S GUILT" AS IF WE HAD ACTUALLY BEEN THERE, LIKE WHAT RIGHT DO I HAVE, TO STRESS ABOUT THE EGO-BASED TRIVIAL BULLSHIT OF MY EVERYDAY LIFE, WHEN THOSE POOR PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T MAKE IT OUT ALIVE WILL NEVER HAVE THE PLEASURE OF BEING GRATEFUL FOR EVER AGAIN? WE'RE WALKING AROUND LIKE ZOMBIES WITH OUR HEADS SO FAR UP OUR OWN ASSES, BEING DIRECTLY INFLUENCED BY EVERYTHING WE SEE AND HEAR IN THE MEDIA. WE HAVE ALL BEEN MOLDED BY IT, SWAYED EVERY WHICH WAY BY BIAS NEWS OUTLETS WITHOUT DOING THE RESEARCH FOR OURSELVES ABOUT THE ONE SIDED STORY THEY CHOOSE TO DISPLAY. WE'RE SO QUICK TO HIT THAT "SHARE" BUTTON, MOST OF THE TIME WITHOUT EVEN READING THE ACTUAL STORY, BUT JUST BASED ON THE HEADLINE ALONE. WHILE IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE IN THE KNOW ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOT LET OURSELVES BE CONSUMED BY IT, AND THAT COMES WITH THE ABILITY OF SELF-AWARENESS. THAT HIT ME PRETTY HARD TONIGHT BEFORE I SAT DOWN TO WRITE THIS. I WAS LETTING IT ALL CONSUME ME, AND THAT IS WHAT FUELS THAT FEELING OF DEPRESSION AND OVERWHELM.

IT WAS VERY CLEAR TO ME THAT I NEEDED TO BEGIN HEALING MYSELF FROM THE STRAIN THAT THE WORLD HAS PUT ON MY HEART AND I'M SURE ANYONE ELSE OF EMPATHIC NATURE COULD RELATE TO THIS FEELING AS WELL. THESE FEELINGS ARE VERY REAL AND ALTHOUGH I FEEL THE NEED TO SUBMERGE MYSELF IN MY INTROVERTED STATE AND HIDE AWAY FROM THIS VERY FLAWED WORLD, I REALIZE THAT IT IS SO ESSENTIAL AS A HUMAN BEING TO TALK ABOUT THE ISSUES THAT ARE MAKING ME FEEL THIS WAY. IT IS ALSO VERY ESSENTIAL AS A HUMAN BEING, THAT WHEN WE FEEL HELPLESS, WE NEED TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE. WE ARE OF NO USE TO ANYONE IF WE REMAIN HIDDEN IN FEAR. NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR THE TRIVIAL BULLSHIT THAT IS DESIGNED TO DIVIDE US IN OUR HUMANITY. NOW IS THE TIME TO COME TOGETHER AND BE A CRUTCH FOR ONE ANOTHER THROUGH ALL OF THIS FEAR, CONFUSION, AND PAIN. WE MAY NOT BE THE VICTIMS OF THESE PHYSICAL CRIMES, BUT BEING EXPOSED TO IT ALL IN MIND AND SPIRIT EVENTUALLY TAKES ITS TOLL ON THE SOUL.

IT IS WITH ALL OF THIS HEAVINESS IN MY HEART THAT I HAVE DECIDED TO CREATE THIS MINI-WORKSHOP FOR ANYONE WHO IS HAVING THESE SAME FEELINGS AS I, TO HELP THEM HEAL AND DEAL WITH THE GRIEF OF THE GLOBAL LOSSES OUR WORLD HAS SUFFERED IN THE RECENT DAYS, MONTHS AND EVEN YEARS. WE ARE SUFFERING AS A WORLD, AND NO ONE TRAGEDY IS WORSE THAN ANOTHER. A TRAGEDY IS A TRAGEDY, AND IT IS ALL OVER THE PLACE. ALL WE CAN DO IS SPREAD OUR LOVE WHERE WE THINK COULD USE IT THE MOST AND STAND TOGETHER AS THE LIGHT WORKERS WE ARE, BECAUSE IT IS OUR LOVE THAT WILL SAVE THIS WORLD.



ART:
"ESPRESSO
-PARIS"
BY LEONID
AFREMOV
(MEXICO)

Wounded World Workshop: an exercise in healing

created by www.JustinasWorld.com



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MINI E-COURSE
THAT I HAVE CREATED
IN ORDER TO HELP US
HEAL FROM THE
TRAGEDY AND LOSS
ALL AROUND!

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE "GOOD" OR A "REAL" ARTIST TO PARTICIPATE. ALL YOU
NEED IS YOUR HUMAN EMOTION AND A FEW MATERIALS!

WHAT WILL I GET WITH THIS FREE MINI E-COURSE?

* A 32 Page Colorful Digital PDF Document With Step by Step Instructions of the Process, so even an art beginner can easily follow along!

(NO PRIOR ART EXPERIENCE NECESSARY TO PARTICIPATE!)

* Instructional Video Files of Me, Your Host (Justina Carubia of www.JustinasWorld.com) guiding you every step of the way!!

*Supplies List

*Band-aid Clipart

*Coloring Page of the Painting done in this exercise

(This encourages those who don't have the time to complete the painting exercise, or those who don't feel confident enough in their painting abilities, to participate as well. This is also a great page to incorporate into children's lessons!)

*Encouragement to break down your walls of fear whether it's creating something new, venturing out of your comfort zone, or fear of judgement.

*The ability to express yourself and clear the blocks you are having from being able to be of service to others.

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Nikki Nurtures' mission is to inspire and educate women to live happy, healthy lives through the alignment of mind, body, and soul

ABRAZINE

WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO OUR
UPCOMING MAGAZINE ISSUE REVIEW!
WINTER 2016 - REFLECTIONS
FEATURING OUR SPEAKERS



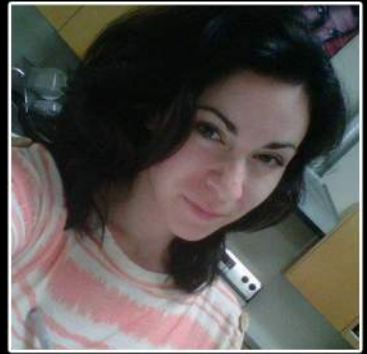
Justina Carubia
(Editor in Chief)



Avinash Patel
(Photographer/
Contributor)



Christa Rimmer
(Hypnotherapist/
Contributor)



Nicole Aguilar
(Lifestyle Blogger/
Contributor)

To attend, all you need is a computer, webcam, internet connection, and a Twitter Account! Want to give us your opinions? JUMP IN ON THE CONVERSATION! We are taking live webcamers in our rotating virtual seats! You can also join in via chat feature in our room's sidebar! Come join us!

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SUBMIT TO THE SPRING 2016 ISSUE

ART:
"Starry London Night"
By Nicolas Raymond
(MD, USA)

WE WILL BE EXPLORING THE THEME OF MOVEMENT

As we come out of winter and our natural phase of "Reflection" (a theme we have so vastly explored in our last issue), our human essence begins to defrost and our gears in turn shift with the season as the warmer months welcome us once again. The term MOVEMENT holds various meanings that are worth exploring, as the frost melts away and life begins to joyously flow back into the veins, propelling nature on its course to everlasting change. A Movement can be an act of changing physical location or position, the general activity or bustle of people or things in a particular place, or a change or development in something, like that of a story, poem, or movie plot. Movement can also indicate fluctuation pertaining to financial markets, or variation pertaining to music, dynamically speaking (key, tempo, structure). Movement can also symbolize a group of people working together to advance their shared political, social, or artistic ideas. It can signify a campaign, or a means to change the world for the better: a crusade, a fight against war, or civil rights matters. Movement can also literally signify the moving parts of a mechanism, like that of a clock or a watch. It is through the tests of time that change is able to naturally occur! We ebb and flow like currents with the water, a painter's brush across the canvas, or a dancer's exuberant leap across the stage!

As many literal meanings as MOVEMENT can have, it can also be a very beautiful topic to explore, theoretically. As humans, it is so essential to experience movement because it is the very thing that keeps us growing and learning. To move from point A to point B - the MOVEMENT is not so much the destination as it is the JOURNEY: The KEY to self-discovery. Exploring this topic alone can in turn help us realize the very things we need, in order get to where we know we ultimately need to be.

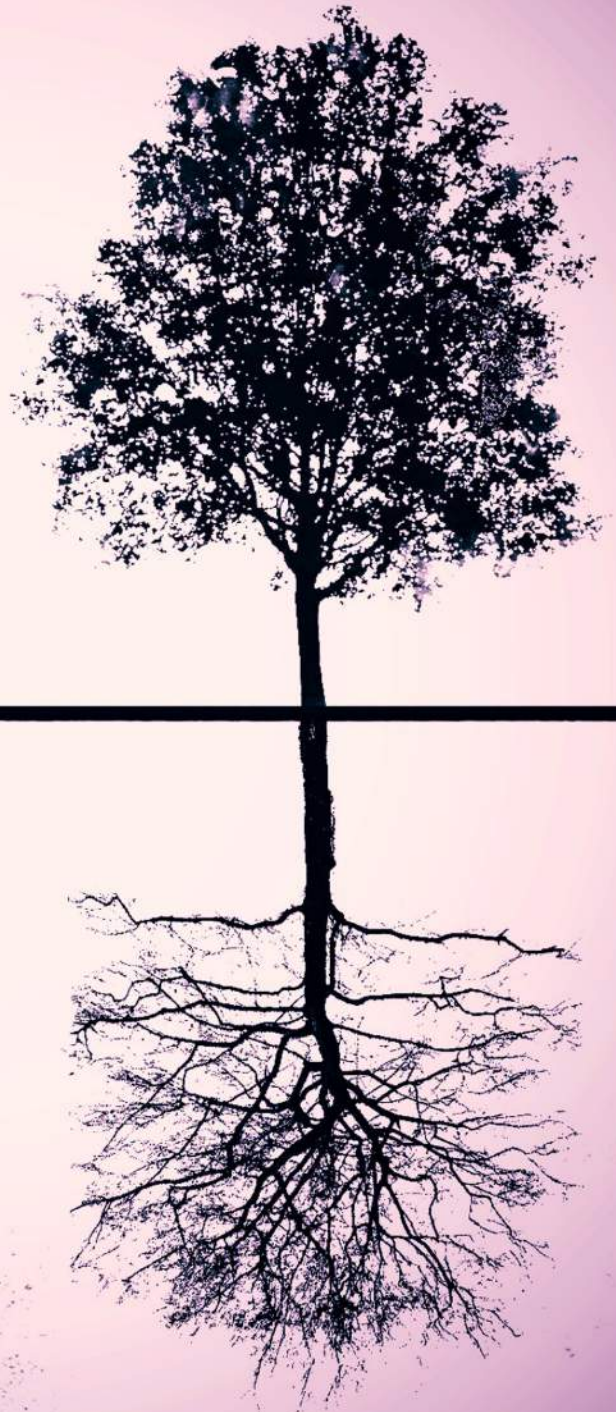
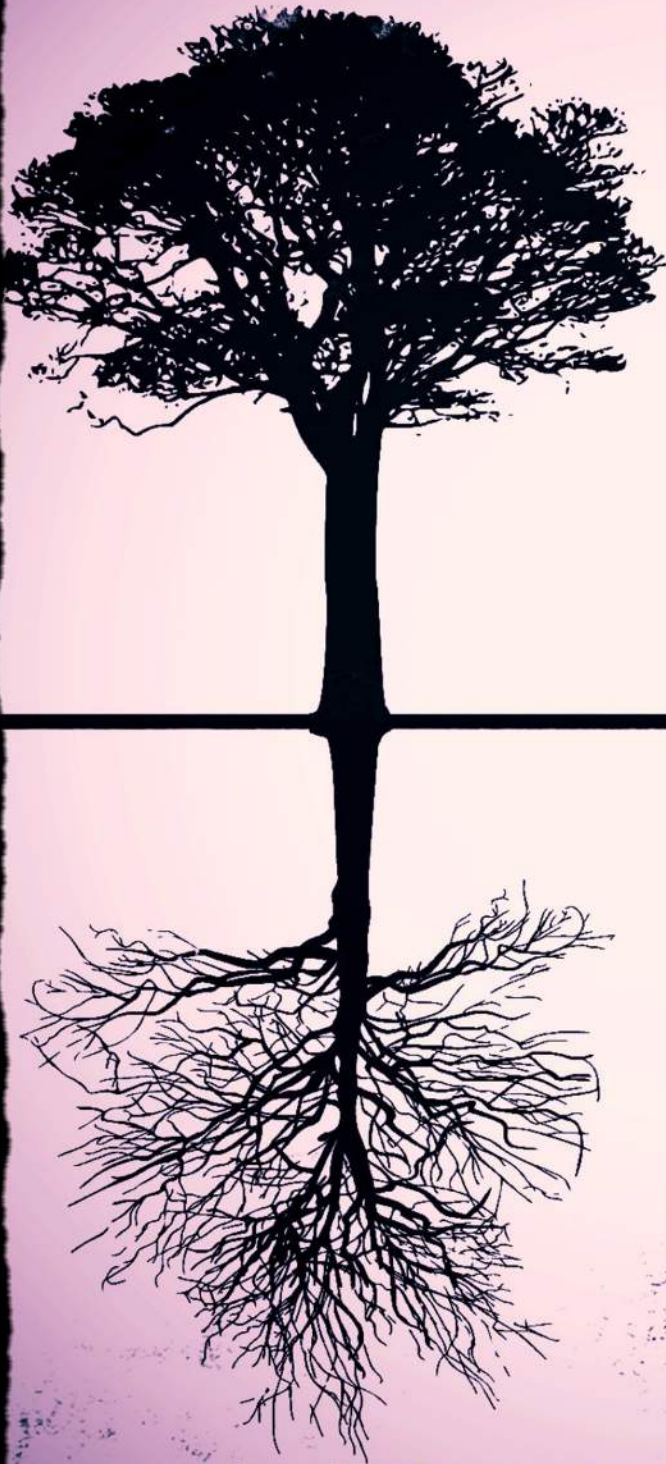
In our upcoming issue we will explore the theme of MOVEMENT to propel us forward into our Spring season! Contributors are welcome to submit any form of material pertaining to this theme! We are looking for all kinds of submission pieces such as artwork, poetry, lyrics, music, stories, vlogs, how-to instructional pieces, meditations, prayers, affirmations, inspirational quotes, photography, recipes, arts and crafts projects, art videos, tips and tricks for the season, travel stories, folklore, fairytales, spiritual experiences, etc. These are just some submission ideas to jog your imagination! We will also accept anything seasonal (Spring) or holiday related. If you have an idea for a piece that is not on this list, send it to us at Info@Abrazine.com!

**BEFORE SUBMITTING, PLEASE READ OUR
COMPLETE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES HERE**

THANKS FOR READING!



Art By:
Rick Kaplan
(Princeton,
New Jersey
USA)



SIGNUP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER!



Art by Markus Pitkänen (Finland)

"toostubborn to believe its impossible"

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