Essence literary and fine arts magazine is a collaborative effort of Kutztown University students who share and express personal feelings, philosophies, and views through the artistic media of photography, illustration, life drawing, poetry, and short stories. The works contained within are considered by the essence staff members as some fine examples of creative art and literary expression. The Essence staff expresses appreciation to all its contributors and readers for sharing in this creative student publication.

This year's Essence magazine incorporates hand-copied typography and collage as graphic elements; however, these should not be considered as examples of the juried fine art. Furthermore, the selected pieces of artwork should not be interpreted as illustrations for the literary selections.
Oil Paint

paint a picture of me as a writer
and I'll tell you how it should look
it'll be in the morning
I'll be wearing long john bottoms
and an old white wife-beater
my hair will be thick and longish
it will be sticking out in morning directions
I'll be in the bathroom
turning away from the mirror to look at you
with a toothbrush in my mouth
which is filled with foamy foam of the minty persuasion
I'll have bags under my eyes
and the reflection in the mirror
will be of a thousand lions
and across the room of my studio apartment
will sit my typewriter with a piece of paper
on which I have written
of dreams and nights and heroes

Jake Warfel
before the rickety bridge

Feet dipped into water -
cold tushummack creek piercing our toes.
sun dotted between thick trees,
we walked on wobbling legs,
mushy bark sticking
to bottoms of feet,
arms out to the side -
balancing.

skinned knees still in fashion,
we’d sit on moist grass
by tiny waterfall, waching
sparkling melted snow swush by—
whispering secrets and
cursing for the first time.

we’ve since traded our band-aids
for make-up and hair spray
but once in a while,
we look down to that stream—
the scent of eastern in the air.
with hair in ponytails,
we let our toes get dirty again.

mahiray n. murria

Kissing Strangers

can caffeine be named responsible
in league with this strong cycle spinning
me up into myself like coal to to be sprung
on some unwitting handsome boy
or other women inviting delicious
there is no abatement of desire
no valle release for the quick electric jump
that ties all the nerve bundles together
this is one quivering mass, anticipating
not tonight though
no way to satisfaction
when the fantasy is more important
than whatever can truly (not) happen
imagine fingers running over unfamiliar
musculature and through dark tempting hair
perhaps the curve or glisten on the lips
is the hyper-drive fuel to debauchery
rocking the flatfress with loud cries
and wonderful predatory delight
inferring the rising blood pressure
and silk unfurling between my legs

erika c. stanley

Night Life

at sunset eluding
shadows on the hillside
through clouds

crickets awaked.
up from bedded
cat tails spooked deer
awaken

the dosed sky
mixes palette blue
then golden-purple illuminations

two hawks stretch
their feathers
on updrafts of wind.

a wooden coal
then another jumps
over, spits over
explodes crack, crack
on the pine floor.

yellowish moonlight. air
shows breath’s clouding
magaLy Ln

gentle autumn breeze
then its chill is felt
how black when

sun is gone!
how serene, how silent
when the light is gone

stoke the fire from its diminished glow

a million year’s growth

towers in clusters
like skyscrapers
from the city
but notice when
the shadows jump
up that tree
and faces across fire’s dance;

see the pea round
stars appear as
a three buckled
onyx belt.

john mccarthy
slung my bag over my shoulder and gently rubbed my hand

Josh Nickenbaugh, untitled, oil pastel 22.5" x 19"
something about romance

The focus tree in the cracked pot is dry and small. Black flies circle the soil.

It is summer in rural Pennsylvania, a college boy puts his surfboard on top of his car. He waters the lemon basil plants one last time. Somewhere a man puts his hands on his wife’s hips and the middle son remembers it years later as romance. He wonders if he can become a man able to forget the things not necessary and remember things like childhood romance, his mother’s smile and a ripple caught in a photo of a frog.

Still the flies dip and veer between the crackly focus branches and no rain has fallen in months.

Emily Edenon

the women

without all the hardness of having to name why I do have nipples
we make love in the dark we spread our smiles

but I want to feel, the wake of muscles turning me inside out in time to the others, be an out of control cycle to have a new way of skin at my hips andunker down wide to piss to feel the weight of my breasts lift them with my hands

Lopsided cloves, garlic and blue great sag and buried skin lactating finger-nails running through your hair a fish bone cere

I want to grow strong in your way not at the salt lick, but by need, tramping the Pump
I want to talk in small places like women do

Carl Walkler

Silent Cinema

Pressed amongst humanity watching a world flicker by man and women talking. Laughing children dancing moto racing in the dust myriad images, yet not a sound only pentamime

Silvers projected on a screen beauty, glimmer, mystique gaze into the looking glass of fantasy coalesce with the celluloid escape from reality and the cadence of ordinary life

shattering the glass, breaking the illusion whispers from the man next to me tapping feet beating a tattoo on the floor cutting the silence reluctantly back to smothering awareness feeling the weight of my body crushing the velvet plush seat.

hastily reconstructing the dream to be in the desert walking along the hot arabian sand clumping Rudolph valentine’s hand instead of another dreary morning answering the time clock’s insistent command.

an hour and a half’s journey depart at the box office window and returning there at “the end” homebound on the moonlight road clutching my tattered coat around me wisps of breath tracing patterns in the winter cold deaf against the noise of the world.

weather waver

Bliss

over the rushing faucet, she still hears his fork scraping her good china. He salvages all he can off his plate, stands, and pivots into his ready recliner. She skirts his peripheral vision, clears the cv tray four feet to his left, and promptly circles back to her station as the coffee table produces a lighter and a cigar his paycheck deems worth lighting. Rausch flowing once more, she soaks, scrubs, and smiles when her head cocks to the right, lemon scented steam mixes her eyes.

erin evans
A Heart Torn Asunder
by the Weight of a Woman

How can the moon stand the light of the sun
or the turtle, not in contempt, watch the hare run
toward the desert’s sand not any the clouds mocking high
reeling their moisture from up in the sky

A tear of privilege which is brought,
your failure is all I’ve ever got
out of it, I’ll leave me to wail
and another whose heart you can sustow.

A Heart Torn Asunder
by the Weight of a Woman

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The Girl with the Amber Curls

she wore golden avenues of curls in long spiral strands
down her back and shoulders, soft, bouncing springs
revealing glimpses of her elegant, simple neck and
vanilla white skin. I.e., a yellow haired boy with large
blue eyes and a disposition for screaming instead of
talking, smiled with me to the library and admired the
beauty that pervaded her every step. "There is no
too much squeezed into such a small body," I said as I moist-
tened his dry lips and sealed in his direction. "But you
know your tendency to be a boy friend." He responded in a
slight sign of desperation, we both agreed that he must
be a girl or an idiot who could never appreciate what
we are before us, what was so easy to see.

our walk led us to the entrance of the student union
building where college students gather to talk,
eat, drink coffee and discuss how they are going to
change the world with late night study sessions and
alcohol red eyes

we stood waiting for my sunshine and some of our
appreciation for the basic things in life, the things
that make the clouds break and catch a fresh handful
of cool water on your lips, eyes and face when it is
most needed. I felt complete comfort in our shared
isolation, as I always do when talking to her. "It’s so
if we stand behind the mirror of the world like detec-
tives investigating a suspect’s interview and share our
social commentary a conversation I always need in order
to make sense of the backward way of life.
I stag my bag over my shoulder and gently rubbed
my hand against my forehead to remind myself I was
alone and needed to move on. So we walked across the
chiseled, concrete walkway scattered with gum and
cigarette butts, we could no longer hear the dull mur-
mur of the students suddenly a voice shot like an arrow
and spoke the words, "my love, can I talk to you for
a minute?" as it pierced our ears. It was the girl
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Lolly

There's this girl in my class with really happy eyes.
She probably looks in her gym kit when she gets tired of their kisses
but doesn't ever wonder why.

My old best friend Bethany was shyly like that sometimes.
Ratapting how easy it was to be
delusory fun and despised
when we were more swinging from our favourite fort tree
we named her 'Lolly' cos she was weak.
Bethany had red hair so I asked her if her hair was red down there
and instead of replying
she just smiled with those happy eyes and covered me
with her dusty long fingers embracing her stuff
like a fairy with her wand perched to paint plants
quite crudely with her own bright crimson colour
brushing across my face on her 18th birthday eve
we consummated our friendship
only like girls do it in the 90's

And now I want to be that bold
and I want to ask that girl from my class with the happy eyes
if she swings that way.
My arms are too frail, my eyes often break
like Lolly's branches in the wind do sway.

Armin E. J. Myer
Last Halloween Bash In
An Ideal Kutztown

wright lights blazIng the small town
crowds crammed with craziness, above
the marching, street lights blurry, the vendors
cooking, grilling, selling, porches jammed
gleeful bodies sprung in disguise
in the modest red brick house, barrels flow well past
any closing time, stereo screening
ny-jo pearl jam pink Floyd
zany each caco and fifteen familiar faces
reacting to the pulsating, shaking walls
fun in the side room, drunk girls senseless
one arguably angry friend irate,
finally stops getting after several hours, beer mugs
spent all over the joint, people
crashing out in various corners,
roommates passing out hard in their beds
police cars parked in their
lots, no red lights revolving on this, one fine night.

orien marks

Request um Pacae

I don't have any
poems any
less than
thirty-five lines try
thirty-five thousand not
just lines but lives each
expressing each possibility becoming each
you crushes
no manhole cover
me down to
thirty-five because of
stingy state school sweetmeats where
my essence lies tattered and
verdured like
pillared wreckage
topped towers
stranged gates punitive
in a thirty-five line
kabob shivered on your
academic butcher's knife you
make me into Hitler trying to
shorten my poems

james c. dolce
With Emily

I feel I know her truths she rests inside me
a suppressed resolution
my words made of her
reincarnated poetry
without a name—without a face
natural with a restless base
my own insurrection breathes
life through words
only she understands
from the seed of who I am
I write

alyssa oliva

Alcoholics Synonymous

it's the alcoholics synonymous
social礼
they are nervous and kloated
on quick fun and hard lust
I watch the plastic conversation
floating on its alcohol to
dead ears
and horribly decorated walls.
It mimics the same
thick, obvious, meaningless and ultimately
defunct
wine and drift
to you ethereal, hell.
cups twist and bottles lift,
people are restless and as generic
as the assembly-line bottles
they cling to
poor social babies to the party breast.
not I'm all alone. Baby.
break out those cards—and
if you play them right,
someone is getting laid.
chance is everything now though.
and everyone seems to be taking it.
vines are flying
off the atrocious walls
their wings are as bread and
nondescript.
as the smiles that released them
everyone has been wearing those
false teeth
and
in fashion tonight.

josh nickenbaugh
I've Known Sundays

we sit in one of the darkest, smallest sundays I've known. outside the crickets sing their haunted prayers, crying like babies for God to offer them more moonlight, more hope. inside, we sit stumbling, she and I, singing glances with respect to the cricket's tearful quakes. brief, forced, wondering communication is our agenda. we talk to each other as the light outside runs away. like a hermit called home to the mountains, violent orange-reds and blues collapse, clashing — I almost enjoy it. inside, the fluorescent light glows a sickly yellow, tinging our flesh, our mouths, our minds in artificial. I listen as the radio hisses, signals clashing. the cycles have run their course, the moon wanes somber. the signal rockets lost. I open my mouth to respond to the questions [never mind then, they are all the same]. my voice is tiny, abstract, just another chirp. the door knob twists easily. she exits slowly, so I can see her silhouette leave. headlight's pass, radio hisses, the crickets sing louder, sing on.

a r i a n z e i d e r s
Duckman Visits
Me at Work

cutting through the farmer market stench,
from aisles away, rang out the quacking cackle
of the man we called the duck.

we'd shuffle in, dragging the dead leg,
with cane wobbly in hand and body angles askew.
"call the cops call the cops call the cops"
was the phrase he'd auction off. Like we was a thief.

but the drake could barely even see to steal.
through thick panes of glass his eyes
would search the shelves and store.
for deals or young females.
such was the way at sixam's drugstore
where i ranked right up there with tylenol and kleenex.

so a surprisingly human moment once
the duckman kissed my hand.

end i, disturbed. watched him squawk away,
with the rest of the old birds.

joy thiesen

the pneumatology of
Selma Lagerlöf

lies in the corner a bed positioned in the yellow light of city
street lamps tattooed and streaked from the streets which lead
you there, perfumed in sweet peach blossoms, smiling, crawling.
in slow moments through staggered moments—a picturesque still
life mosaic formed in swift-sweet moments—you come unto me and
me unto you. some fated night when you kissed me in a
momentary shock. the coolness of your feet, a scene of me and
you in the static of youthful passion—cognitively drowned in
eclipsed nets of mad kisses. times that should fold up tight.

pressed in my little boy packets, carried through to morning
where you lay silhouetteed, the warm sun through the panes, gold
upon your back, skin so tight like a canvas, where my kisses
shook you from sleep and into the morning.

i have held the summer dawn in my arms, though it falls
short to you being there on cold november nights, soft to one
on silk, slid in, molded behind your cold back, lively in song
so i can't sleep the long night through, the silver dawn upon
us, woven in emerald blankets, the improbable notions become
aphoristic constructions, like a river singing madly from a
proud mountain, babbling, pours burning hard kisses of freedom
across the flesh. rich and basic, configured lines in
the primitive image, a body formed in the most beautiful
imaginations of heaven itself.

and what is more perfect than all this which carries
in me tiny wrinkles of my mind?

timothy simpson
playful words

—science serves to unfix the shallow soul
once transfixed in immense solitude
shh! whisper catalyze over rolled and
done with time, esp of quick wit
flinch, grab, jerk, meet the whimsical
will holding still
the life once shell
into nonexistence. Fill
yourself with pills, escape,
debate, debate yourself until
stop
breathe, reassess the incessant drone
dominant, overwhelming condition of
life
become yourself through pain
lose the gains and wealth and health
never lose sight of purpose

joel simet

It's Not Pheromones,
It's Fabric Softener

any, you and me near and my lights light up
like a slot machine winner;
and it's green full speed ahead go go go
if i had less self-control, i'd grab you kiss you hold you,
throw you in my car
drive you to the middle of nowhere
and teach you how to love me.

than we talk and i realize you just washed your coat
and i hear the word "no"
so i wonder
where do you get your fabric softener?

joy shussem
MISTER MIKE

the first time i saw cars there were hundreds of
them outside old mister mike's
they swarmed his long driveway like yellowjackets on
somebody's face i asked my mom i said hey what's up with that?
she said mister mike's dead he had himself a heart attack.
 i'd only seen him a few times his house looked like
a a spaceship coloured dim and grey it sat on top of this
huge hill we'd sled down his during the big winter storms
it was me and pudge and stinky and meg i was always the most
afraid within hours his driveway iced up like an awkward
moment i hesitated in my chunky blue mittens quite
frightened of the steep drop that bellowed before me. now
when mister mike would coast down his slippery hill in his
slOek new grey car he could turn into his grey garage for
safety—a kind of aerodynamic safety our fluffy innertube
creased with children never seemed to have. after a quick
rush to the edge of the frozen blacktop, you couldn't see
anything at first but the rolling white hills below. so far
off in the distance i'd stand back and watch my three friends
disappear over the edge that looked like the end of the
world. and mister mike would step out to wave so we knew
everything as okay his grey hair curvy like grass on a grave.
the next nite the cars were gone and i sat upon the
top of mister mike's driveway all alone staring out at that
precarious drop thinking about all the children it ate up his
windows were dark the sky rumbled a foreboding storm as i
crouched there and wondered why the cars had never been there
before.

Anney E. J. Ryan
Shattered Shells

she slammed the driver’s side door of the Toyota and dropped the car keys on the driveway. Her dead father had always been disappointed in her. His cold blue voice was in her head now, reminding her that she crashed the family car into a post office box, got caught shoplifting red nail polish, and got pregnant before she was married.

She looked at the Little ranch house with dirty white siding, and she saw big gray moths flapping around the ugly yellow deck light. Above the roof, the November moon shone like a whitewash flashlight, outlining the scraggly bare branches of the black maple and the zebra birch. The sour wind blew leaves across the long grass of the lawn and out onto carver street. Her penguin waitress uniform smelled of fish and beer, and cigarette smoke was stuck to her salt and pepper hair. She inhaled the fall wind, and the cold hurt her lungs. She knelt down on the sparkling macadam.

When she got home last night, she had opened the brown kitchen door and felt the warmth of the coal stove get sucked over and past her into the darkness. “Shut the door,” her husband said flatly from somewhere inside the house. “I’m not paying to heat the neighborhood.” As she closed the door, she had heard her boy laugh.

He had quickly crawled out from under the sandy brown kitchen table and skated across the wooden floor in his dirty white socks. She had dropped her purse on the end table in the living room and knelt down on the blue rug. He stood in front of her with his hands behind his back. His green eyes shone under his messy black mop of hair. “I made something,” her boy had said, looking at the tan wall behind her. “And it’s for you,” he put out his hands in front of her. They both peered into his sweaty cupped hands. He was holding a little brown seashell. He had gotten it from a clear plastic bag of seashells that he had found at the beach that summer. He kept the bag on a shelf in the basement behind the stacks of National Geographics. This shell was cylindrical, and it had tight brown spiral like the roof of a Russian cathedral. The shell looked like a brown ice cream cone or one of the devil’s horns, and there were grooves in each spiral like the grooves in a record. There was a tiny hole in the base of the shell, and he had strung a small piece of white yarn through and tied it.

“Isn’t the horn of the last unicorn,” he had whispered to her. “And it’s for your keys.” So she had tied the shell to her key chain and hugged her boy. “Thank you,” she said, kissing the top of his head.

Wow, she watched her pale, bony hand touch the cold driveway. She pushed at some yellow leaves from a sassafras tree, looking for the sharp silver of her keys. She felt the wind through her thin white blouse and black pants, and her arms and legs were quickly covered in goose bumps. She pushed her hair out of her eyes and tucked it behind her ears. Between an orange maple leaf and two red leaves from the birch tree, she saw her keys. The little brown horn of the last unicorn was broken into 10 or 12 sharp geometrical shapes. There was a small piece attached to the yarn on her key ring, and the inner shell was the same transparent white as an eggshell. She didn’t touch her keys. Instead, she stood up and leaned back against the hood of the baby blue Toyota. In her head, she spoke in her father’s cold blue voice, and she told herself that she was disappointed. Her boy would be upset, and his green eyes would turn blue. He would think that she didn’t like his gift, and he would be disappointed too. She had promised that she wouldn’t disappoint her boy like she had disappointed her father and her husband, but the moment swept down upon her like it was part of the whitewash light that the moon sprayed down on the yard. And she told herself this in her father’s voice.

Jake Warfel
step up to the edge
(and follow through)

as he steps from the curb, he closes his eyes and
imagines himself stepping off the edge of a tall building
his heart races as he becomes one with everything. the wind
pulls his clothing tight against his body, and tears streak
his face. his mouth wide open, falling. then his feet hit
the ground and he continues on his way.

eric oswald

erad wunkle, wish, oil on canvas 32" x 24"
Haiku 7

your words are the wind
and i, a leaf tumbling
through your gentle gust

Alyssa Gill

Slowly becoming an alcoholic

work, i'm hardly thinkin' about it,
let alone doin' it.
all i want is to be out of here

in such a slow grind, that is real life
you can easily get lost,
sometimes you even lose your self

back on the ladder
now up three stories high.
my hand is hooked to the bucket,
out my mind is nowhere to be found.
I don't smoke,
but the breaks would be nice.

I don't even drink,
but there's something about painting houses,
it does something to you,
it changes who you are.

David Kulp
Breakdance Suburbia

a simple medium
a task, a job
an outward extension of lights, fingers, vibrations and electricity
of something more than music, more than sound
more than the grinding gears of walking, talking, and repeating
a breaking sunrise, pale golden and orange
colliding with the charcoal night
splitting the black and white and building the poison blue sky
streets sprayed with dark gray and
green, brown, red and pink
moving through bodies stacked like blocks
whose feet drag across the new morning
with caffeine and gasoline spearing through dead veins
moving faster
painting an image
systems full blast
the radio "check" is on
driving faster still, beginning upon beginning
breaking, lifting, reaching receptors
pulling, pushing, gliding hit-smash-shatter
oom!
Like a rush of cold water over cracked desert ground
swimming like a long feather bow across violin strings
creation
the movements set to real life audio
pure and unadulterated
beyond critics' examinations and words
freedom
in full stereo surround sound

N. H. LOW
Weekdays

driving away
every mile passed
pulls my heart more
68 miles and my home away from home
becomes a prison locking me away
every sunday afternoon my life shuts down
my soul becomes dormant
waiting to live again
impatiently waiting
for friday to set me free
most of my life waits for him
many call me weak & dependent
the feminist inside me shakes her head in shame
again and again I try to tell her what love is
and sacrifice is okay if I'm in love
she and everyone just laughs at me
except him
because he lives for the weekends too.

Amanda Smyers
Faculty Advisors:

Kate Clair
Heather Thomas

Senior Designer:

Peter Balkner

Art Staff:

Chris Clark
Erin Evans
Jeanne Otangalisch
Jeff Talley

Literary Staff:

Audra Keinert
Katy Schappell
Marshall Pickard
Jillian Sidor
Kristin Kroyer
Anneg e j. Myan
Karyn Buchanan
Ann Linkovich
John Estock
Lucy Francisco
Erin Evans
Clint Ettinger
Jade Warfel
Alyssa Oliva
Aubrey Murray