ESsENCE

2002 fine arts and literary magazine
Kathy Hohn *untitled* chromogenic print

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Essence Fine Art and Literary Magazine is a collaborative effort of Kutztown University students who share and express personal feelings, philosophies, and views through artistic media of photography, printmaking, painting, life drawing, poetry and short stories. The works contained within are considered, by the Essence staff members, 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 incorporates collages and hand-done type. However, these should not be considered examples of fine art. Furthermore, the selected pieces of art should not be seen as illustrations for the literary selections.
Michael Martrich

spread

like insect
legs

spread like
crustaceans

this do For
me

in your
symmetry

nothing so
Lovely

where giving
feels

so much better
than

getting.

Steve Husted i'm behind you chromogenic print
Evanna Shaffer 

harwich sea port, england screen print
Antoinette L. Colon

I drink a lot of Heineken beer.
I use the foaming scrubbing bubbles to clean mi bano.
I stare long and hard at my geology books.
(if only osmosis worked)
I’m afraid to ask if I am a good mother.
I write poems, high all day.
Does this say something awful about me?

I work hard ’til late Saturday nights.
I have laid in a good supply of ibuprofen tablets.
I’ve gotten skinny from poor eating one meal a day—if I’m lucky.
I’ve used cocaine to help me stay alert and marijuana to help me relax.
I don’t exercise anymore, except walking on campus.

I was bored by Gone With the Wind, the movie.
I pore over Newsweek.
I’ve read 30 articles on pregnancy, Lamaze, childbirth, infancy, and childhood.
I like Biggie Smalls better than Tupac Shakur.
Doesn’t that say something awful about me?

My hand is losing momentum now, cramp is approaching...
I think I’m losing interest in confession.

I’m no Betty Crocker or even Aunt Jemima.
I say nothing to strangers on the street—and teach my son the same.
I write grocery lists faster than I can read them.
I don’t always enjoy the soap operas.
Maybe Drew Barrymore is my favorite movie star.
If I could just think of the names of the movies she starred in.
I hope I am very ambitious.

The Confessions of Antoinette

Amanda Kusant

To and Fro
Misunderstood or Misled
both ladies are there
with their big breasts and tiny waists,
and insecurities and pink lace
panties and bras
talking without saying a thing
too much make-up and too little thought
discussing the new things that they bought
or who’s on the cover of Cosmopolitan magazine
or what’s the most they can eat without gaining a pound
lipstick, Dexatrim
barfing in the bathroom
and fetching a beer
cooking gourmet meals
that are eaten on the sofa
Oh, what we’ll do for men!
Kathryn DeBevoise

February 23

staring inside the empty room
icicle tendrils climb
my trellised ribcage.
why isn't this unusual?
my empty mouth fills only with lukewarm air

i realize no one sits here because nine
bricks
are rising from the mud walls.
this thought is not strange because
beside the empty choir
a red nose and yellow
bodies dance the feverish cycle—

faux happiness in tie-dyed ghettos
of rice paper, tape, point on boards
concrete objects
commemorate life's impermanence

you died eleven years ago yesterday.
telegraphic speech of yellow,
orange and cool forest moss
become phrases when you left.

when inarticulate shapes
of blank memory were washed turquoise,
the dam released a burden

every year we ask,
"do you know what tomorrow is?"

a red latched door
means anyone may
occupy the vacant chair.
unhinge it from the frosty orange clasp.
remember,
it is february twenty-eighth.

abbreviated, knotty limbs press
against frozen velvet
seeking answers,
hiding under ferns.
eleven years ago bony,
tan nine-year-old hands
first shared words; bony,
pale hands
still write them.
Mirror images pantomime-plastic people. Pacing supermarket alleyways eating, throwing up, dreaming. Head slumped against a toilet seat, beauty bubbling, burning holes in her brain.

Beating down the door, monsters of madness, melancholy. She feeds the need with needles of self-doubt, self-mutilation and a shattered self-image, anything but food. The broken pieces of a person reflect back at her, hazy and distorted in the brown-stained tiles on the bathroom floor. Hunger bleeds in the bulging eyes, empty, void of identity and anything resembling a self. But she does not, will not, can not see it.

Burning, aching sobs wrack the body, while inside, all is still—the calm in the eye of the storm. Looking out, reeking through the layers of skin, she is there. No one hears the dying child desperate to be real again. No one hears her incoherent nonsensical cries. Not even she knows who she is, or what she is trying to say anymore. All she knows is that no one must see her face, inflamed infectious and intolerable thing that it is! Who could love her face? Fatted flabby ferocious face.

Tearing tiles and time, collapsing clogged, cornered, an animal awaiting execution.

Words float in the air, thick and unhurried like rose petals in a mud puddle; "He loves me." Another pink precious petal drifts past her droopy eyelids: "He loves me not."

Lies, lies, lies. She finally, blissfully, mercifully possesses out on the bathroom floor.
They take their lightning lightly toasted
on rye beneath fluorescent bulbs
in diners no Pope would ever visit
scrawling hearts in a fifty-cent journal with a stub of pencil
leftover from second grade timed tests.
They find themselves waking from sleep to scrawl on Walmart receipts

"trees crawling like caterpillars across the moors"
and "peach fuzz beaches kindly licked by the tidewater slide."
and then roll back to gentle slumber and dream
not of Japanese Cherry trees snowing on Paris streets
not of clear moonlit nights on a houseboat in Italy
but instead of the sun, rising over the fog-choked turnpike and the peanut butter sandwiches.

Lucinda A. Francisco
Jason Mosheim

Our two-person line is cut in half by the traffic of a single car. I cannot let this happen so I step like a death metal giant into the open window of the '83 Rabbit and onto the lap of the offender. I almost twist my damn ankle on the curvaceous corduroy thighs of the guy. I'm in a mobile cave, hunched into a college rock dwarf under the draping maroon cloth of the ceiling. Finding shaky security on the CD-laden passenger seat, I assume an unorthodox swan-dive position and launch myself from the interfering vessel, crunch into a core of punk rock, do a slick forward roll then walk beside you once again, missing only a sentence or two of your silence.

Elisha Darville

Your words, stirred from heated emotions and desperate grief, a movement away. Now, turned to observe the living world's intricate simplicities.

However, I wonder what you would say in other predicaments. Where different worlds, time, and space collide against blank sheets and open minds.

I question. I want. Give details on process, I crave understanding. I need to know how to show. Show, do not tell me your ways to compose art.

Do you, like Hemingway, stand at podiums in the early morning hours blended into the night and consume brandy and whiskey tumblers? Or do you gather manuscripts like stamps, tied neatly and then artfully arrange them above your heating vents like treasure to be hoarded? Or do the words just flow Victoria, Rainbow, Angel? Connected now to your pen then the neatly lined white paper. Never doodled artistically or written in decorated journals. Instead of filled with mind babblings, there are undiscovered veins of truth and emotion, rising in fatigue.

There is no mention, however, of this and only discussions of grief, understandable hope future's exultations and understood past I don't criticize, like those others for glitter and sheen, and lustrous words that stream melted icicles across my tongue. For I know, you have reason.
i'm venting swelling
into a seventies-style
green booth seat
with semen beige trim

Andrew Lee Mortrich

...and dear lord, I went with the best of them.

The coffee is drab,
the waitresses are lonely
...and dear lord, I went with the best of them.

The coffee is drab,
the waitresses are lonely
...and dear lord, I went with the best of them.

We sit as if in mourning...

dry humor, sparse conversation,
and coffee beans block.

i'm venting, only for me to see and
for no one to notice.
I'm all wet, from head to toe. The raindrops shower me with a childlike joy. Looking up, I cannot see the moon any longer, but just before it passed behind the weighted clouds, I watched as it turned a deep red. Now darkness creeps along the seascape, stealing all the remains of shimmering moonlight. Suddenly, an east wind sweeps across the ocean, forcing the waves higher and higher. They begin pounding the shoreline. Quickly I climb across the slippery rocks. And as I step down off the jetty, the surf surges, knocking me to the beach. I can taste salted sand, and spit it from my lips. Splashing myself clean, I leap to my feet, and start to play in the warm soup. First stirring my feet among the shells, at water's edge. And now, still I stand, letting my toes fill with sand, as retreating waves wash over them.

Then "Boom, Crack!" lightning pierces the sky, replacing night with a daylight view of my distant home. And alone, I leave my footprints in the sand.
A Great Day for Freedom

Ryan L. Sitter

FEELING DISCONNECTED TO ONE'S OWN BODY WOULD BE...

That there was no choice—that what frightened Jenson. To be placed fully into this bulbous, fluid-sack of a body was condemnation. A condemnation of what, though, Jenson did not know. She didn't know how to feel. She had never tried it before. Blank mind. Tabula Rasa in perverse extreme. And it never stopped—that was the worst part.

Feeling disconnected to one's own body would be unnerving, but what if...

What if, for the first time, you were connected. To fingers. To toes. Various bits of skin, nail, and bone. And nerve endings.

Hundreds upon thousands ... Trillions. Trillions of bits of energy, quarks and ions. All possessing a charge that cascades one-upon-another until a feeling emerges within your brain. A sense. You could go mad trying to sort it all out. But the human body knows better. It deals each small charge into the appropriate basket—a receptacle—and the charge is processed most expeditiously. "Glorious," Jenson would have thought, had she the vocabulary to use the word. She without reason... she without logic...

For the first time, Jenson. For the first time. You are you, entirely.

One day she may have her hair in long braids, caressing her shoulders. Perhaps, her hair will be shaved off completely. It will truly be a great day for freedom. Her heart, which began as only a few cells, will be the size of her fist, and it will beat proudly in her bosom. Her breasts may heave slightly when she breathes heavily: following a brisk jog or a rewarding sexual experience.

But that day—that day is far off...

Poor laughable Jenson. Her innocence will be her undoing. Her fear, her master.

With so many feelings emerging at once, Jenson is truly being traumatized. Lips. Nose. Eyes. Heart beat. Brain activity. How long has this been going on? It may have been minutes, or even an eternity.

Pressure begins to well around Jenson. She is being locked—once more, a new feeling—away. Separation from her base. As Jenson feels herself being pushed back, her heart beats faster and faster. Her body screams and reels with another trillion senses emerging inside of her like lava bubbling up from the volcanic basin. Is it pain or ecstasy? Surely if she'd the perspicacity, she would say it is both.

Jenson is feeling alone. Alone from herself. And rightfully so, for her time is no more.

It was Jenson's duty to guard her shell for forty weeks. She did not pick this job; it is simply the nature of her existence. Her shell was pressed out by uterine contractions... through the vaginal passage, out past the labia minora and majora. A great day for freedom. A great day for freedom, indeed. Jenson has been relieved of her duties. A new life force has come to exist. Now Jenson rests, until instinct is called upon again...
I killed a butterfly the other day—
oranges, blacks and browns
swirling on my windshield,
sticking on my wipers,
whizzing by my eyes as I
instinctively turned them on,
I felt for her—or him, I suppose—
while the foam and plastic crushed her,
and I wondered later where she'd
landed after my actions.
Just a moment ago, I almost stepped
on the same kind of butterfly,
Monarch, I think it is called,
and I wonder if they were sisters.
myself awake, shamed, unaware of pace,
long gone suitors begin
to recall their wet lip days,
vanished and renamed in three fire shades
of brown cypress hair tempting.

future was an absent friend who's late and never stays.
the dead stop drop veritas, cross another day off,
so we abscond with those below same shoved above,
ever indelible, the long vanish hoisted on our backs,
laconic soil anthem of supplanted romance;
of abscession, teaching us movement.

B. Zeiders
Kara Getsko

The way the fiery globe in the sky never fails to rise and fall
Falling behind on the never-ending pile of laundry
The season in which crisp leaves clutter the streets
Glistening chandelier on New Year’s Eve
The inexplicable heartwrench that follows when that person
falls out of love with you
The way you fall asleep during first period history class
Falling for the same dull joke every April Fool’s Day
The great fall the tragic hero experiences in the current novel you are reading
A soldier falling out of line at the wrong moment on the battlefield
The way in which your plans fall through and you are left alone
Waterfalls pouring clean refreshment, drowning the confusion in your head
The way you fall for that person, head over heels, with no warning
The excitement of a young child when the first tooth falls out
The falling out you had with your boss yesterday morning
Tossing, turning; the way in which you fall out of bed to a rude awakening
The fallen angel loses its glorified wings
Promises and dreams ripped out by the seams and

Autumn Moon On Thy...
Christina McGeehan

There is flame in my eyes
As the sun sets outside of my window
There is a world behind it
Miles and miles round

A simple authentic guitar with soulful
And simple original riff

Smells like burning leaves from down the road
And barbequed conversations

Stray cats thinking they are chickens
Walking like their back is under construction

My heart roasting my thoughts
People thinking helplessly
And living so removed from life
Comfortably

There is FLAME in my EYES
Michael Borraso Dodge Swinger 1974 oil on canvas

Don't steal
they don't care
in a cloud of smoke

I long to my favorite moments
and now society makes me feel
mutilated by music of all genres
they just fill in black silences

Don't 3. I'll be loved ones

My heart roasting my thoughts
People thinking helplessly
And living so removed from life
Comfortably

Borrowed criteria from sociology
Exhausting each new picture of fear
for bringing this thing bull
these people love me

Each has his moment
the only reason to live

Marianas Trench around our heads
words and laughter dance

And earth's finest creation, kind bud

Marijuana Elegy
Oh Villainous Thievery of My Name!
Why were you compelled to take it from me?
Bob Dylan whose damn treachery will be tame.

I had uniqueness till along you came,
How dare you commit blasphemy!
Oh Villainous Thievery of My Name

Could’n’t you have stolen your hero’s name?
Robert Guthrie doesn’t sound that off key
Bob Dylan whose damn treachery will be tame.

Why fore bring shame on my glorious name?
I don’t know who inspired this iniquity
Oh Villainous Thievery of My Name

Bob Dylan whose damn treachery will be tame.

MAY ALL OF YOUR HOPES AND IDEAS TURN LAME
From the grove I rage continuously
Bob Dylan whose damn treachery will be tame.

MAY ALL OF YOUR HOPES AND IDEAS TURN LAME
Lori Remmel fresh brood chromogenic print

untitled (she cradles her sense of loss)

Amanda Sayers

she cradles her sense of loss
consumed with grief
one can smell the moistness of fallen tears
and taste the bitter ripeness of her acidic heart.
the edges of her turn yellow and she slowly begins to fold inward
and wilt away
hollow and empty
she's numb, but feels everything tenfold
who let the world move on?
and leave her in a desperate sullen standstill
no longer dormant, but gone
never to return to smiles or careless laughter
or a place where pain doesn't prevail
so she won't sit alone
not noticing lifeless tears creating shallow streams down her cheeks
and she could look up again with dry eyes and nose
and live pure again

and then out
while someone sets the trapdoor
so she can learn to walk again
Lori Remmel tomato polaroid image transfer
Strumming the tout strings
Of a beat up banjo
Perched ever so in a worn out rocking choir
An essential element
Married to the rickety front porch that supports it
His mind is out of order
Its bags packed and on its way to better places and greater things
Body is cold
He wraps himself in a hand me-down-flannel
That complements his personality
His disposition
I press my face to the windowpane,
And store at the lightly falling rain.
The clouds so thick and soaked in gray,
Shadow the sun on this rainy day.
I close my eyes and listen to the sound,
Of a million raindrops making love to the ground.
I lean so close and almost kiss the glass,
In which the warmth of my breath does pass.
Slowly I move my body away,
And see my breath still there to stay.
On this little cloud on my window pane,
I raise my finger and inscribe my name.
Jason Moshein

Someone’s son is masturbating behind a half open window above a sloping roof. All I can see is the boy’s midsection and the thing he’s doing. I casually wave to see if I can get a response, but the hand slides back and forth mechanically. And I get no reply. I continue to watch passively, soon discovering an uncomfortable hardness in my pants. Which I try to ignore. Suddenly the window is dropped shut just as you-know-what generously sprays all over the interior of the window and no sooner than the act is completed, a gunshot explodes, producing a splattering of the reddest blood I’ve ever seen, throwing the kid smack up against the window onto two of the three colors of the American flag. Chuckling, I walk into dusk, sipping my ice-cold Pabst’s Blue Ribbon and adjusting my crotch, preparing to tell the cops that I ain’t seen nothin’.
Josh Houser

Burning blue ice-eyes,
cr- kr- crackling with kindling,
set in swamp,
where salamanders
slid over blue skin,
melt my innard.

It seeps out my still-structured pores
and dribbles
into a pulsing reservoir,
sending ripples,
breaking waves which
whisper -ish- -ish- swish
on the shore.

(inner gasp)
But maybe it’s just the gloss on the page,
I think.

I blink...
my dribblings now
oil in a water salad.

Jennifer Medved untitled pastel
I stood by the maple tree in the backyard of the house we grew up in and gazed out my naive ten-year-old eyes to the expanse of parking lot across the street where we often played. My sister, brown hair incessantly ponytailed, bobbed along behind me as I walked out the aging maroon picket fence gate, which was also the source of many a childhood splinter from its cranky old planks, and headed out into our parking lot playworld.

Two of the neighborhood kids, Amy and Scott, had already drawn up another game of hopscotch on the pavement using those infamous large multi-colored chunks of powdered chalk we always drew with on the lot, the kind whose powder you can never seem to brush from your hands after using. Amy and Scott were older than the rest of the neighborhood kids, and a constant source of fun for the youngsters on our block.

Hopscotch was our game. We tried to play every day in the summer, the neighborhood kids, my sister and I.

It was more than just a hastily drawn chalk creation on the hot mid-afternoon or the cool summer night's pavement of the bank parking lot, it was our way of life.

Amy, her curly long dirty-blond hair drawn up into the usual half-ponytail, carefully drew a board of yellow blocks and numbers on that summer evening at almost dusk. My sister and I were happy to be out of our yard, tired of playing in the purple leaves of our all-too-familiar maple, and were anxious for the hopscotch to begin.

Even though Amy and her twin brother were probably about thirteen years old, they always made the rest of us younger ones feel like we were on their level. I think that was part of the reason we were so eager to participate in the neighborhood playtime, since my sister and I were both very shy.

"Hey, Val, are you ready? Did you find a rock yet?" Amy asked.

We ran over and eagerly joined the twins and the rest of the crew at the foot of Amy's drawing. A few kids soared past on rumbling roller skates over the black expanse of crushed tar and rock. The parking lot was sticky from baking in the sun, and its tarry stones often found their ways into the nooks and crannies of the soles of our glittery jellys, the plastic open-toed sandals we were never without in the summertime.

A whirlwind of laughter, rock-tossing, and general childish banter ensued as our hopscotch game progressed and finally ended just as the air became too cool for our striped shorts and sweaty thin t-shirts. We were all exhausted and ready to go inside for the remainder of the night. My sister bounded past me back through the tired, squeaky wooden gate and entered our house. The sun was reaching closer to the earth with each passing minute of daylight, and the black blanket of night was not far behind; streams of yellow and pink filled the dying sky.

I looked into his blue eyes, then looked down at my plastic yellow steering wheel. I pretended I hadn't heard him, I fidgeted with the twistable black handle grips attached to the yellow wheel, where the colorful bursts of decorative streamers stuck out and flopped in the wind. I don't know what he said next, or if he said anything at all.

I got up and pushed my way back through the angry gate, tinged a darker red from the aging summer night sky, and I didn't look back.
Kathy Hahn untitled black and white print
Beth Nosek

The man reaches slowly for the red and white can of
tomato soup. His fingers
extend, and then grab the
can slowly, slowly begin
to lift. The can hovers
off the shelf; the man
realizes too late that his
grop is inadequate,
everything so inadequate.
His wife's voice blots
with a painful frequency
into his already throbbing
head, "Inadequate! And you
call yourself a MAN?!
"

His boss's monotone drone follows immediately: "This work, well, this work
can only be described as inadequate. You used to be so adequate."

The can is slipping further away; it already slipped through the limp
grop with which he held it. He watches it, transfixed. He could have saved
it if he had so wished, why didn't he save it? He would have been so damned
adequate if he would have saved the can from its dent demise on the stained
floor of Discount Food Shack. It continues to fall; the label blurs into a
pinkish parachute (the parachute was very adequate).

A shopping cart rushes up the aisle to run him down, and the woman
steering it is crazy! She has a little spawn of Satan in the broken kid seat,
the demon spawn screams as if his father is dragging him down into the fiery
depths from which he came. The child is beginning to grow one single front
tooth. It's just sharp enough to bite. Peristalsis works the man's face and
he feels it drip; a salt shower seems rather inadequate.

Ahhhh, the can. It had fallen. He looks in horror as he sees the dent, as he sees
the dash in the factory-made perfect clone label. He had ruined the perfect label. His
face fills with unspeakable rage and he sweeps his hand across the whole painted-white
metal shelf, sending the whole nothing
group of tomato soup cans into flight. They laugh as they fall, quickly this
time. The man screams, a scream to wake his wife, sleeping silently now,
a scream to make the baby, the king of evil's spawn, cry out harshly again.
He had ruined them all!
Kara Getsko

Vanilla droplets

shower me with sweet

moisture, seeping in

the crevices of

my small, calloused hands.

Surrounded by soft,
gentle embraces

exchanged with mother

before the nightly

sugarplums sunk in

my innocence. Ice

cream-milky and wet-

leaving frothy trails

upon upturned lips

quenched with smiles and

laughter. A dollop

remains, either to

be absorbed or to

be forgotten in

this dehydrated

dream sequence we live.
Is it rape?

Melissa Heichel

Is it rape if she smiles?
If she lets him yank her hair
'cause it gets him off?
If she lets him in?
C'mon baby i take you over here, you cold? My arms are big, come in i hold you
put my hand on your chest as you doze kiss you eyelid if you sad come on in
baby i know what girls like you look for.
Is it rape if he knows she's stupid?
If his stubble rakes her face
but she doesn't care,
If the pinching hurts but she pretending.
If she takes it for him?
C'mon baby i take you in my place, i fuck you on the couch. My room? Nah. You might
see that picture. My parents? No. They meet enough of you types. You hand icy, baby,
here. put it in mine and I'll blow. That better then now, baby, you warm yet,
baby, you hot?
Is it rape if she smiles at the bite marks?
If he walks her to the door but not to the car?
Is it rape if he doesn’t give a fuck
but to fuck?

Danielle Zeigler missing you charcoal and conte
Lucinda R. Francisco

I don't know how people can write poems
Their words just fall off pens like droplets from the faucet to the drain
splattered across the page
cartwheeling sultry jazz music
against the eyebrow of Elvis and it all comes back to the
lover's eyes--
crystal stalagmites sparkling in the flashlight beams within dusty dark caves;
Their poems are magnificent

I might only sit here on my shrinking green blanket
atop blue and yellow flowered bed sheets
beside a stuffed triceratops
thinking about how I should be flossing;
praying
cleaning my face
sleeping
how I'm not saying anything
how when I do say something it's an accident
how when I get inspired
and stare and stare at the wide mouth of moon
and the clouds sliding like languid jellyfish through the stars
I merely wait for such lightning to strike that I would
leap for my pen
and write and write of Arusha when it rains
and sordid gypsies
in the morning
and candlelight over the bowed head of Joan of Arc

on Mars
too
instead of all that everyone else might say
Kathy Linette

Save me from my dilemma—
Leaving this place behind
Tell me before I go
the reason

Why - give me a reason
as I'm searching the clouds
in your eyes
Spread your arms and try
as I ask myself the question—
Does there always have to be a reason?
Logical, rational explanations inside—
Wish they existed in this mind
Tell me before I rip myself apart
the reason

Why - give me a reason
as I'm clutching my shirt
so very tight
Spread my arms and try
as I ask you the question—
Does there always have to be a reason?
I know you know the answer—
You know I do too
One day I will discover
the reason

Why - there is no reason
To spread our arms and try

So I stand up and wonder
no reason to utter
the words that don't exist inside—
Huddled, as I leave this place behind