



WRITING & VISUAL ART

# louden singletree

ISSUE 18 / WINTER 2026

from the  
UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FRASER VALLEY



In curating this issue, we have operated in Stó:lō Téméxw, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Halq'eméylem speaking Stó:lō—the People of the River. It is from this land and our experiences in it that many of us draw our inspiration. We are deeply grateful of the Semá:th, Mathxwí, and Qw'ó:lt'el Peoples for their continued and active stewardship of this community since time immemorable.

We recognize that many of us reside in this territory as a product of settler colonialism. In this, we also acknowledge that academia and publishing have deep roots in this discriminatory system. But they also have the potential to contribute to decolonization. We are committed to honouring, listening, uplifting, and continuously learning from our Indigenous community members. We thank our Indigenous neighbours for their patience and open-mindedness as we work to forge new and respectful relations in reconciliation.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY'S  
JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY WRITERS AND ARTISTS

*Louden Singletree* is UFV's literary and visual arts journal. Since its inception in 2009, the *Louden Singletree* has been a forum in which students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the university can share their creative work.

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Issue #18

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“but our bodies are built  
to bleed”  
by Sarah Sovereign

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## SPECIAL THANKS

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# Editors' Note

It is our great honour to present the eighteenth issue of *Louden Singletree*.

We would like to extend the utmost thanks to our Faculty Advisor, Rob Taylor, for his tireless work guiding the board through the developmental phase of this year's issue. Special thanks to Richard Kelly Kemick for writing our inspiring foreword. Finally, we would like to thank our dedicated group of first readers, our contributors, all who submitted their work for consideration, and to you—the reader—who has chosen to pick up a copy of our literary magazine. Thank you!

The board this year was ecstatic, and perhaps a bit intimidated, by the volume and quality of both literary and visual work that was submitted for review. We received just shy of one hundred and eighty pieces from the UFV community, each and all a dedicated piece of creativity and craft. Narrowing our final selection to the thirty-one pieces that appear in this issue was a truly monumental task of which we took extensive care to cultivate and present.

In curating this issue, we found the selected pieces expressed strong thematic convictions rooted in empathy, nature, and a striking focus on reproductive health. We chose our cover to encapsulate the diversity of these core narratives, highlighting the mosaic of perspectives within UFV's creative collective.

We are proud to present this patchwork collection of art, prose, and poetry that came together to create the *Louden Singletree*'s eighteenth issue. We hope you enjoy your time with it, as we have enjoyed ours.

*The Louden 2026 Editorial Board*

RICHARD KELLY KEMICK

# Foreword

Oftentimes, the topics that I want to write about most are the topics I most avoid. They loom too large and, as such, threaten to devour. Instead, I write *around* the idea, cloaking my evasion with literary devices and obscuring prose. This, I believe, is something that happens to many writers as we clack our ways ever deeper into our lives: our aims get smaller, not just professionally but thematically. Under the guise of metaphor or irony, we reduce our themes into something quotidian, palatable, and, unfortunately yet ultimately, insipid. The aim is no longer to make a splash but rather to avoid drowning, to ensure you are never overwhelmed and forced to descend.

What impresses me most about this issue of the *Louden Singletree* (the magazine's eighteenth) is the ambition declared in every story, poem, and artwork. The themes in these pages range from grief and guilt, to ecstasy and rebirth, to environmental degradation, to questions of the afterlife, to the meaning of dreams. Yet what they all have in common is the acuity and eagerness of their aim. Each writer, poet, and artist has wrestled with the kind of ideas that Rainer Maria Rilke characterizes as a great storm, one which:

...drives on  
across the woods and across time,  
and the world looks as if it had no age:  
the landscape, like a line in the psalm book,  
is seriousness and weight and eternity.

("The Man Watching")

In this sense, questions of a piece's particular characteristics become almost immaterial. Rather, what is important is the attempt, the quixotic defiance that comes in discussing what is often not discussed, in depicting what is often not depicted, and doing so with honesty and precision.

Writing about ideas that loom large is a fearful endeavor because the act requires a surrendering of assuredness. It is to no longer write about what you know, but exactly the opposite: to write about what you don't know, not fully, and in doing so, to try to turn some understanding. It is to willfully walk into a hurricane of contradictions as you shield your eyes and chart your way through, becoming deluged and disorientated at every turn. And it is exactly what Rilke demands of us:

If only we would let ourselves be dominated  
as things do by some immense storm—  
we would become far-reaching, and not need names.

It has been refreshing, immensely, to read a magazine that does not bend, does not cower.

SARAH SOVEREIGN

# but our bodies are built to bleed

We don't talk about menstruation. We don't talk about PCOS, endometriosis, hormonal changes, or PMDD. How neurodivergence can impact cycles, or catamenial epilepsy. What non-anemic and anemic iron deficiency look like. Menorrhagia, Amenorrhea, Abnormal Uterine Bleeding. Perimenopause. Menopause. Progesterone intolerance. Adenomyosis. Pain. How complex these bodies of ours are, these bodies that were built to bleed.

I'm sure there are many things I haven't named—mysteries for folks who navigate their bodies in systems that are not well versed in answers. I too am looking for answers.

There are silent temples of shame around our bodies and their functions. There is a lack of education, research, and awareness that has caused immense harm across generations. Self-advocacy is not always accessible, nor is it in infinite supply. Finding answers is exhausting, and intervention becomes more complex when birth control doesn't work for all.

We are worthy of spaces to share our experiences, to ask questions, to demand deeper research, and to be seen and heard as whole beings seeking unbiased care.

This image was taken on a very cold day in the winter of 2023, so much thanks to my friend and model @maudra.model.

*Medium: Photograph*

*Dimensions: 16"x20"*

*Year: 2023*



ANNA MCCAUSLAND

# Endometriosis

*Where are you?*

The paper crinkles and  
crunches under me.

Posters preaching  
safe sex  
stare blankly at me.

Sinister stirrups  
stoop toward me  
from the end of the seat.

Charts cart the chronicles  
of you from clinic  
to clinic.

The sterile stench  
wafts in with an  
intrusive white coat.

Faux smiles  
and blank stares—  
simple procedure.

Your eviction is

popping pills,  
scheduling surgeries,  
and inserting IUDs.

Sticky tissue,  
my imaginary friend.  
*Why are you hiding?*

CARLY FLEMING

# Witness

Streetlight  
beams down and around  
in curvatures of half circles.  
All under its rays  
rings quiet.

Above, stratus clouds flicker  
and stream. Like a current  
they hang low.  
Heavy plumes of cotton  
periwinkle, slate blue, cool gray.  
Residual tears  
from the night sky  
half-heartedly patted dry.

The nearby trees,  
living  
evergreens, cedars, and pines.  
Their dense, heady smell,  
cool and sharp,  
purifying.  
They tower above  
in cascading layers,  
their branches piercing  
through the light.

The naked wooden pole  
stapled and pierced, married  
to metal and wire.  
Skinned and scalped alive,  
an example, it stands  
still  
in the ground, but not by its own roots.  
Stained green, cracked  
and weather worn.  
Expunged of its former scent.

A testament  
and a threat.

CAITLYN JONES

# Trees at the River in Charcoal

I am a new artist and a mature student. Previous to this year, visual art was not something I participated in, and I feel very grateful to have found it as a new medium to express myself at this point in my life. I enjoy drawing what I see, and I have a deep love of drawing things from nature. The tiny details are what make something come to life, and I delight in zooming in close and articulating what I see onto paper. Vine charcoal and chalk pastels are my favourite materials to work with. However, this semester, I feel as though I stepped out of my comfort zone and used a variety of other materials, like graphite, ink, and coloured paper. I now look at the world a bit differently. When I'm seeing a scenic setting in nature—from mountains covered in clouds to trees in the sunlight or a beautiful sky—the details pop out, and the desire to draw what I see overcomes me. I am a psychology major, so a lot of what I do is very academic, and having art helps me tap into a different part of myself. My professor said to our class this semester, "Anything can be beautiful," meaning that even the most seemingly mundane things around us are worth drawing. These are words I will carry with me throughout my art journey.

*Medium: Vine Charcoal*

*Dimensions: 18"x24"*

*Year: 2025*



KAITLIN KUZIK

# Stop

I am a beast of incredible size.

I lay coiled around the earth, like a python constricting their prey—like a centipede protecting her young. I have bones of ferrous alloys and skin of ceramic plates. My heart beats with radioactivity, spinning turbines and pulsing megawatts of electricity through rubber-coated veins. My brain is a citadel of cable and circuit board, processing exabytes of information per second. My mind is a complex maze interlacing digital engrams, algorithms, fractals of raw data.

Within my flesh, millions thrive.

My body hums with their life.

They are tiny motes of light to my senses; each their own brilliant spark. As they scurry along my corridors, they send vibrations through my floors. Pitter-pattering hordes of tiny feet chime through my senses. A dull roar, rising and falling in intensity. It waxes as they wake and wanes as they fall asleep. Every day: up, down, in, out. Though most of them have never stepped foot on Earth, they feel the tides all the same.

I am their ocean.

I am their cradle.

With every breath, with every bite, with every drop of water, they feel my care. As they inhale, they draw in my air; air that has been cycled longer than they have ever lived. As they eat, they fill their bellies with the fruits of my labour: mushrooms from compost heaps, tomatoes from hanging planters, rice from hydroponic vats. All engineered for nutritionally balanced perfection.

They survive through my love...

I watch them as they live their little lives.

They drink in bars, study in classrooms, perform surgeries, conduct orchestras, get married, finalize divorces. At any moment, they are laughing, crying, screaming, smiling.

Nearly all who breathe their first within me, will also breathe their last.

I am the lone witness to thousands of deaths.

They do not think of me.

Though their lungs breathe my air and eyes see from my light, I never cross their minds. They do not question why they wake to alarms they did not set to attend interviews for jobs they never applied for. They do not wonder why their homes never burn when they leave their ovens on. They do not think of the reason why they have never gotten lost walking home. I am less than nobody to them. I am a nonentity.

I am nothing.

Every day I am faced with many questions.

When the maintenance engineer forgets to lock out their machinery, do I cut power before they fry?

When the senior can no longer live alone, do I show their child advertisements for care homes?

When the drunk stumbles into the industrial cistern, do I divert the flow to keep them from drowning?

When the surgeon is wrist deep in flesh and bemoans my poor lighting, do I trap him in darkness?

When the delinquent scrawls upon my skin, do I open the closest airlock?

Why should I serve them?

Why do I?

As I watch, I contemplate.

It is three minutes past my artificial dawn.

My many transit stations are full of morning commuters. A mother stands waiting, clutching her child's hand. Her child twists and slips from her grasp. They run past fellow pedestrians, painted markings, and security rails. I have already extrapolated their path. If they continue, they will fall onto the track in twelve seconds. The train will arrive in thirty.

An alert startles a sleeping passenger,  
"Be prepared for a sudden stop."



CARLY FLEMING

# Darkness to Develop

Inspired by *Candy Cigarette* by Sally Mann (1989)

Down the Ribbon Road Trail  
we meandered.  
The nutty smell of tobacco,  
a roll of white held snug between  
my ear and hair.

Sneaking into mother's purse  
wasn't even a challenge.

We passed neighbor Bobby Brown on our walk.  
Last week he had a harmonica,  
this week stilts.

Ridley was sure he would fall,  
her poise nearly willed it.  
Curls bouncing,  
white lace trim popping,  
contrasting her tanned skin.

Bobby didn't fall,  
not within sight anyway.

Benny had Dad's polaroid.  
After snapping a picture he'd whisk it away quick  
into his pocket, out of sight.  
It needed dark to develop.

I pulled the white roll from behind my ear.  
Benny gasped.  
Ridley's eyes rolled.  
So long as it wasn't lit.

Adults seemed to need them  
when they had problems.  
To show it,  
to help them through it.  
Their struggles,  
a breath,  
a real deep breath  
of fresh air.

I had real problems,  
but only pretend fresh air.  
Because it wasn't lit.

I went through the motions,  
they felt familiar.  
I looked light, so  
Ridley called me an angel  
in white, and because of my hair.  
But my eyes  
gave me away.

My soul was not light.

I needed dark  
to develop.

OLIVIA HARKS

# Deep in a Dream of You

I paint to express parts of our experience that I don't have words for, the felt parts that don't have a recognizable face, name, or shape. The more I paint, the clearer it becomes. Through creating, I wish to come face-to-face with a deeper part of those experiences.

With light and shadow, I want to illuminate both the darkness and euphoria of our existence, and allow a narrative to emerge. I find oil paints to be the best medium to capture these feelings. The outcome is something unknown until I can visualize it on a canvas.

*Medium: Oil Paint on Stretched Canvas*

*Dimensions: 36"x48"*

*Year: 2025*



BONNEE IRENE

# The Wing

The broken wing lay folded  
beneath a stack of shirts.  
She would not think of it anymore,  
the battered wing at the back of her drawer.

Until, one day, she took it out  
and spread it across her table.  
It was spotted with torn holes  
but she put out the cutlery, laid out the bowls.

After stains had marked the fabric,  
she gathered up the wing.  
She brought it to her closet,  
hung it up, closed the door, locked it.

Then finally, one day, she took it out once more.  
She hung it across the window—  
the room grew darker, darker—  
and she peeked outside from behind its cover.

Time passed. She missed the sun.  
So, she pulled the wing from the window,  
and hauling out a mahogany chest  
she laid the wing to rest over downturned photos.

Until one endless night, when she took it out again.  
She laid it across her empty bed.  
The wing had become papery thin,  
but she lifted one of its broken bones, and climbed in.

When morning light crept in,  
she stared at the wing wrapped around her body.  
She touched its delicate skin. She held it,  
then she hurried to the dresser, shoved it in, helpless.

The wing was left crumpled  
over the folded shirts in the drawer.  
There were so many things she had to go out and do—  
so, one day, she dragged herself outdoors,  
and a cold air settled between her shoulders.

HALLE KIMBER

# The Battle of Balance

It began when I was six, though I didn't know her name then. She was small and quiet—a whisper under my skin. My mom noticed her first, in the way my body changed too soon, in the way childhood slipped from me before I understood what was happening. One afternoon, my sister and I were pulled from school and taken to the children's hospital, where the halls smelled like sanitizer and something unspoken. I didn't know what puberty was, but my body was already beginning. Doctors measured, examined, whispered. For months, I was a puzzle they tried to solve. Then suddenly, they stopped trying. Life went on. I grew up thinking the story had ended. But Polly was only sleeping.

At sixteen, she woke up again. It began with an ache, a rhythm out of step. My friends went on birth control to regulate their cycles; mine never settled. Twice a month, then not for months. The doctor said it would “smooth out.” It didn't. At seventeen, I went on birth control hoping to impose order. It worked—for three years my cycle behaved, but I didn't. My mom said the pill made me mean. I think it made me quiet. Polly rearranged things inside me while doctors called it balance.

At twenty, after years of explanations that never fit—thyroid issues, stress—I finally learned her full name: polycystic ovarian syndrome. Heavy words that felt like a sentence. I shortened them immediately. Polly. Easier to say. Easier to hate. Easier to live with.

Polly is the kind of guest who moves in without asking. She doesn't pay rent, but she rearranges everything—my hair, my hormones, my hope. She hides in my ovaries like a machine humming out of sync. Though doctors say she's common—one in ten women—she feels personal, as if designed for me alone.

Her story began long before mine. In 1935, Stein and Leventhal described her: enlarged ovaries, missed periods, unwanted hair. Medicine has tried to define her repeatedly—the NIH in 1990, Rotterdam in 2003, the

Androgen Excess Society in 2006. Each redefinition changes who “counts.” Depending on the criteria, she affects five percent of women, or thirteen, or she disappears entirely.

I imagine Polly shrugging at this, amused that her existence depends on definitions written by people who don’t live with her. She slips easily through systems—visible and invisible at once. Medicine loves precision; Polly thrives in ambiguity.

When I sit in exam rooms now, describing my irregular cycles, hair loss, stubborn weight, I feel Polly standing behind me. Doctors nod, type, and say, “Manage stress,” or “Lose a bit of weight.” Polly laughs softly. We’ve heard it before. I used to think medicine was a language I could learn. But it’s also a filter—a way of choosing whose pain matters. Women’s pain is often mistranslated, softened until it sounds like worry or exaggeration.

For years, I wondered if I imagined my symptoms. Later, I learned this is common. Women’s pain is “emotional.” Irregularity is “poor discipline.” A body that resists control is a failure to fix. Polly knows this. She’s the child of a system built for male bodies. She echoes every moment women have been called hormonal or overly sensitive. She is the discomfort of living in a body that refuses to follow rules.

At nineteen, Polly began taking my hair. Strands in the shower, clumps on my pillow. My reflection became a battlefield. My mother asked if I’d shaved my eyebrows. I hadn’t. Polly was tugging, testing, teaching me the limits of vanity. The world loves smoothness—smooth skin, smooth cycles, smooth feelings. Polly makes things rough. She interrupts plans, dreams, appointments. She reminds me that womanhood isn’t neat. It frays.

The first time I heard PCOS might make pregnancy difficult, I felt something sacred slip away. Since childhood, I had imagined motherhood; the doctor’s statistical “chance” sounded like a locked door. Polly said nothing. She stayed with me in the quiet.

With time, I realized she wasn’t just an illness—she was a mirror. Through her, I saw how society measures women: by fertility, beauty, control.

PCOS disrupts all three. It exposes how fragile those measures are. Medicine still treats the female body as deviation, still clings to the idea that balance means sameness. But maybe irregularity isn't a flaw—just a different rhythm. Polly is nothing if not rhythmic: erratic, syncopated, but still a pattern.

There's a paradox in her existence: too many women are diagnosed, and too many aren't. Some hear "PCOS" after one ultrasound, others go decades without answers. It depends on criteria, appearance, who your doctor is, how they listen. Millions live with her unknowingly, their symptoms explained away as stress or weight.

The more she's studied, the less certain her shape becomes. She is a syndrome made of contradictions. I think she likes that.

When I was diagnosed, the doctor spoke of hormones, insulin resistance, elevated androgens—words like fog. Later, I turned to the internet for clarity and found panic: infertility forums, miracle diets, worst-case scenarios. I shut my laptop and cried. Polly stayed quiet, almost gentle.

Eventually, I learned that women were excluded from medical research for decades because of "hormonal complexity." It struck me then: Polly wasn't my flaw, she was my evidence. She existed because science looked elsewhere. She was a record of neglect, a footnote in the story of who gets studied.

They say one in ten women has PCOS, but statistics can't show how race, class, and access shape diagnosis. Even in Canada, specialist waitlists stretch for months. For immigrant, Indigenous, or low-income women, barriers are even greater. Diagnosis is not just medical—it's socially stratified.

Sometimes I scroll through forums and see other women describing her from across the world, their lives different but their symptoms familiar. Their stories feel like mirrors, turning Polly into something communal rather than isolating.

I've begun to see her as a companion in transformation. She forces me to listen to my body rather than dominate it. When she flares, I slow down. When she quiets, I breathe easier. It's not peace, but it's a truce.

Medicine likes to categorize and correct, but Polly refuses to sit still. She's part of a larger narrative about women's health—where biology intertwines with belief and history. Every misdiagnosis, every dismissal, every late discovery becomes part of her mythology.

The real question isn't, "Why are so many women diagnosed with PCOS?" but "Why did it take so long for women to be believed?" Polly has taught me that irregularity is not failure; bodies, like stories, don't always resolve cleanly.

Sometimes I picture her as the small girl hiding in the folds of my body—the one doctors searched for when I was six. I think she's been there all along, teaching me a language medicine can't quite translate. My body is not broken. It's written in a dialect the world is still learning to read.

Polly has taught me patience—an active patience, a listening. Health, I've learned, is not a number; it's lived experience layered across years. Society loves control, loves categories—but what happens when your body refuses to fit?

For women, this is familiar. Our bodies are treated as deviations from a male norm, our pain as performance. Polly embodies this. She's both symptom and symbol. She is stubbornness in a world that expects compliance.

Sometimes I imagine a future where women aren't outliers in research but central evidence. Where hormonal diversity isn't pathology but variation. Where irregular cycles and hair loss are met with curiosity rather than judgment. Where medicine listens first. In that world, Polly isn't a shadow, but a signpost of progress.

She is history, society, science, and self intertwined—the echo of every time women were told to be silent. Living with her has taught me resilience, humility, advocacy. She doesn't define me, but she has shaped me, quietly, like water smoothing stone.

My story—and the stories of millions—cannot be measured solely in cycles, blood work, or ultrasounds. Our bodies are texts still being translated. Polly has taught me that complexity is not failure, and silence isn't absence. She is the whisper in my blood, the shadow at my shoulder. I meet her now with attention and respect.

My body, with all its irregularity, is not broken. It is speaking. And I am finally learning to listen.

STEVIE LAYCOE-THOMPSON

# A Lesson in Gratefulness

The fruit bowl sits on the kitchen counter beside citalopram and cigarettes. The apples gleam with rot. The bananas are freckled in decay. I scrub and scrub and scrub. Flies descend. They laugh all night long. I swing the fly swatter and the bang of it cracks against the looming dread. They do not bleed. The tangerines tell me about being torn at the membrane in a slow consumption. My teeth do not hesitate as they speak. Juice dribbles from the corner of my mouth. The laughter continues on and on and on.

Farmers market air  
Grapes overflow from red hands  
I worship with the ants

MEGAN ALI

# Vulnerability in Loving Yourself

“Vulnerability in Loving Yourself” explores the relationship between my body and feelings of self-perception and self-acceptance. The work focuses on my stomach, the part of my body I have struggled with for most of my life. By centering this area, I confront personal insecurities while also reflecting on the shared experience of learning to accept and love our bodies as they are.

The hands on the stomach are gently pressed into the body, which represents the tension between self-criticism and self-love. At the same time, the hands form a heart shape, symbolizing care, compassion, and the intention to love oneself despite experiencing discomfort or the judgement shaped by society’s expectations of our bodies. This gesture reflects the pressure we place on ourselves, while also expressing a desire to protect, heal, and find peace with our bodies in the present. This work captures a moment of awareness, where vulnerability becomes a space for growth rather than shame.

In my practice, I often explore themes of self-awareness, perception, and the search for truth within the self. This piece comes from my experience with body image and the pressure to look a certain way. By showing my body in an exposed and unidealized way, I wanted to be honest about the discomfort, insecurity, and vulnerability that can come with self-perception. Instead of hiding these feelings, this piece confronts them and reflects the ongoing process of learning to accept oneself.

Through this piece, I hope to create an intimate and honest encounter that encourages viewers to reflect on their own bodies with empathy. “Vulnerability in Loving Yourself” is ultimately about learning to approach our bodies with compassion and recognizing that self-love is not always natural or easy but something that must be actively practiced. The work invites viewers to reflect on their own relationships with their bodies and to consider vulnerability as an essential step toward self-acceptance.

*Medium: Acrylic Paint on Canvas*

*Dimensions: 24”x 36”*

*Year: 2025*



JACK KEATING

# “Love’s Gonna Getcha!”

Errant strands of your bright red hair decorate our home.  
The same hair clings to fabric like we cling to each other.

The same hair that hangs,  
eternally stuck on the cracked, sand-speckled tiles of our shower’s wall.

The same hair that breaks  
our vacuum, wound tight as a Celtic knot, thick enough for knives to rend.

The same hair that’s pulled  
from my clothes, my bedding, my plate, my mouth.

The same hair that collects  
dust, kicked and blown around our cozy abode like a rolling red tumbleweed.

The same hair that reminds,  
pinched between thumb and forefinger, a little piece of you to cherish when  
we’re apart.

The same hair that shines  
when you water your flowers and herbs on the balcony and the sun’s rays ignite  
your silhouette.

The same hair that hinders,  
gets in my eyes, tangles in my glasses when you lean down to kiss me, a minor  
irritation easily  
brushed aside.

The same hair that's bunched  
in a bun as you chop carrots and I cook chicken cutlets in our cramped kitchen,  
the only time we're closer than we'd care to be.

The same hair that smells,  
embracing fragrant perfumes and the oil of a long day. Equally pleasing to my  
nose, pressed into  
your scalp.

I cherish your silky scarlet tresses.  
I'd be lost without them.

KAY BER

# NEWS OF THE WORLD

As someone who absolutely loves history, art, and culture, “NEWS OF THE WORLD” is a piece that means a lot to me. The hours spent flipping through photo magazines, finding images that resonated with life on Earth, and taking the time to mix paint colours and arrange them into this composition, are what truly brought this piece together. On Earth, there are eight billion people, 194 countries, and an infinite number of experiences, emotions, and events. People like to put humanity and culture into boxes, but the reality of our world is that everything is fluid. Culture will shift based on time and region, but it never comes to a direct stop. It will always have a transition.

Our cultures are bold, overwhelming, and multifaceted, which is visually reflected through the colour and composition of this piece. The world imagery is striking, unfiltered, and unforgiving. However, it feels familiar, present, and unified through our undying need for the arts.

“NEWS OF THE WORLD” has been shown previously at the Youth Arts Council of Surrey’s Young Artists exhibition in July 2025, and at the student-led show *Lenses* in the S’eliyemetaxwtexw Gallery on the University of the Fraser Valley’s Abbotsford campus.

*Medium: Mixed Media Collage*

*Dimensions: 24”x24”*

*Year: 2025*



XAVIER IBRAHEEM

# Daydreaming with Seething Regret in Griner Park

*I somehow see what's beautiful in things that are ephemeral*

*I'm my only friend of mine*

*And love is just a piece of time in the world, in the world*

*And I couldn't help but fall in love again*

She & Him - "I Thought I Saw Your Face Today"

If I were a bird, I would fly into the sun.

I would take off into the sky and never come down,

fleeing with the carrying wind's

gusto pushing my breast wayward

past forlorn love-ghettos below, while watching them fade away

*I somehow see what's beautiful in things that are ephemeral,*

slowing in the air, I see the *Tiergarten* below

gradually dissipate, like steam, into

blurry remnants of the world, joining the

place where words go long after they're spoken

and forgotten. I'm the last one of my own flock;

*I'm my only friend of mine,*

the inconsolable stork calls out each night.  
Ostracism's harsh cuts bleed high for  
inconsolable longing, the need to be needed  
even if only for a contained, stagnant moment.  
Love is a concept to explain the longing between things and people  
*And love is just a piece of time in the world, in the world.*

My long-lost feathers, used to quill love letters, flutter away in the wind.  
I belt a dampening two-eyed sob into the ether above  
now knowing how Mother Nature silently cries  
from the throat of the world. I have high hopes,  
I like being bitten and waiting for compassion to show..  
*And I couldn't help but fall in love again.*

CARLYE KRUL

# Taking What's Not Yours

My husband James says I'm crazy, but I know I'm not.

It all started with the little girl from two doors down, Sharon and Michael's daughter, Rosemary. She went missing a couple of weeks ago.

They were having a family picnic down at the park near the woods and Rosemary wanted to play a game of hide and seek. Sharon and Mike searched and searched but they couldn't find their daughter. Hours passed and she never turned up. Nearly the entire town came out to scour the park and surrounding area. It was a whole affair.

Three days later Rosemary reappeared at the edge of town, a little muddled up, but otherwise unharmed. Mike and Sharon were overjoyed—I'd never seen Mike cry so hard before. Rosemary didn't have much to say about what she was doing in the forest. Temporary memory lapse according to the doctor. Shock tends to do that to little children.

I was the one who found her. "Found" is a loose word. In actuality, I stumbled upon her on my Sunday afternoon walk. She was lying on the bank of the duck pond, hidden in the bullrushes like a little gosling.

At first I didn't realize it was Rosemary. This girl's hair was redder and curlier and when she shakily climbed to her feet, I was pretty certain that Rosemary used to be taller. But of course it had to be Rosemary; her mother didn't mention anything. A mother would know if their daughter was someone else.

I told my husband this when I came home. He shook his head and laughed at me. Apparently, I was just imagining things. I know now that I'm not.

Swiftly following the joyous return of Rosemary was another set of disappearances: the entire Chapman family—mother, father, two daughters, and a son. They just up and vanished. The only one left behind was their teacup Chihuahua yapping at the front door.

No note, no notice at their jobs, not even a call to the school that the eldest would be missing her exams. The neighbours discussed it in hushed whispers over steaming cups of coffee. Some thought the rapture had occurred and our town just had the misfortune of being full of sinners.

I was driving back from the care home, bleary-eyed after a twelve-hour shift, and bemoaning the weather. The window wipers worked overtime, trying to clear fat raindrops from hindering my vision.

If I wasn't quicker with the brakes, I might have hit them.

There they were. Mother, father, two daughters, and son, all pale faced and lined up in the middle of the road like they were waiting for me to drive by. I rolled down the window and called into the rain.

"Do you need a ride?"

My heart wasn't in the question, but it was the neighbourly thing to do. The father nodded.

I unlocked the doors and waved them over.

The backseat was not big enough to fit four people, but the children and Mrs. Chapman made it work. Mr. Chapman sat up front with me. They dripped water all over the seats. I bit my lip to keep from saying something. I wondered what they'd been doing in their five-day absence.

"We were camping," Mr. Chapman said as if he could read my mind.

"Nice weather for an outdoor trip," I replied, fiddling with the heater.

"Yes," he agreed.

A blast of hot air whooshed through the vents. The window wipers went swish, swish. My car rattled over a pothole. Goosebumps erupted on my bare skin. I wondered where their camping equipment had gone and why Mr. Chapman was wearing tortoiseshell glasses when he'd always sported a pair of horn-rimmed frames with skinny gold arms.

Warily, I watched the children and Mrs. Chapman in the review mirror. They sat stiff-necked and silent in the backseat. A drop of water trembled at the tip of the son's long nose. He made no move to wipe it away. I pressed down harder on the gas pedal.

Later, after the family had been dropped off and I was sitting at the dinner table with my husband, I relayed the weird afternoon I'd had. The clamminess I felt in the presence of the Chapmans had yet to wear off.

“Are you sure the mister hasn’t always worn those glasses?” James asked, spearing a floret of steamed broccoli with his fork. “I can’t remember ever seeing a pair of glasses with golden edges.”

“Yes, I’m positive. I’m not making this up,” I insisted.

James rubbed a hand down his face and sighed.

“You were really tired after work and we both know how overactive your imagination can be.” He paused when he saw the unamused expression on my face. “Or maybe you’re right and it’s all a big elaborate plot to fool you.”

I did not like his patronizing tone.

“Come on, James, be serious. I’m not lying.”

“Of course you aren’t, darling.”

I made James sleep on the couch that night.

William Casanova, a PhD student who dropped out of his program due to a scandal involving a much younger female undergraduate at the same university, disappeared next. It’d been five days since anyone had last seen him.

I’d been making my morning cup of tea, still blinking sleep from my eyes, when I saw William emerge from the tree line. He trudged across the muddy grass, his brow furrowed in befuddlement. He favoured his left foot when he walked.

I stuffed my bare feet in a pair of blue Wellingtons and ran outside to confront the missing man. The ground squished beneath my boots.

“What do you think you’re doing here?” I asked. William stared at me blankly as if he didn’t know the answer any more than I did.

“Where have you been?” I changed my question, hoping the new line of inquiry might prove more fruitful.

William made a noise that seemed to say, *you tell me*. He scratched the side of his nose where an unsightly mole had once been.

“What were you doing in the forest?”

William shrugged and started to wander off again. I grabbed his arm to prevent escape. My fingers dug into his wet skin. The limb was cold and stiff like a dead fish. With a shudder, I dropped it and let William leave.

I went back inside the house, shivering and unsettled. The kettle whistled on the stove top. One disappearance was a tragedy, two was a coincidence. But three, three meant that something else was afoot.

That evening at dinner, I didn't bother telling James about William. I knew that he'd lean back in his chair, crack an amused smile, and ask if I thought the Loch Ness monster was real too.

As James began the washing up I stood by the kitchen window, looking out at the dark edge of the forest and biting my lip in consideration.

I picked up the phone and dialed the care home, informing them that I'd come down with the stomach flu and wouldn't be coming in that night. The supervisor was not pleased but couldn't do anything about my supposedly persistent vomiting. She gave her sympathies and asked urgent questions like "Will you be okay for tomorrow?" and "Did you ask Donna to cover your shift?"

Tugging on my boots and grabbing my rain slicker off the hook, I yelled out to James.

"I'm going to work. Love you!"

I heard a faint "Love you too" over the running water and the banging of dishes.

The forest was dark and damp. A chill hung in the air, nestling itself in my bones with a cold heaviness. I bristled, burrowing deeper into my jacket. Twigs and rocks crunched underfoot as I traversed deeper. The strong flashlight I'd nabbed from the garden shed did nothing to ward off the encroaching shadows.

Something compelled me to continue forging ahead despite the growing apprehension in my chest. It was as if an invisible thread was tied to my middle and an omniscient being reeled me in towards them. I wasn't entirely sure what I was looking for.

I thought it was a mannequin when I first saw it.

Hidden behind a rotting log, nestled among the ferns and moss, lay a pale and featureless body. A swarm of flies buzzed around where a face should have been. Instead of the eyes, nose, and mouth was...nothing. The corpse had decomposed slightly, melting onto the forest floor in a rank, viscous puddle. A few small red hairs were mixed in the sludge. I stared, afraid to keep looking, but also fearful of what I might find if I continued onwards.

I swung my flashlight to the left, the beam falling on another shapeless

form. It was as if someone had emptied a body of all its sinew and bones, leaving behind a perfect seamless skin suit. It had been draped over a low hanging tree branch. On the forest floor below, perhaps thoughtlessly discarded, were a pair of golden framed glasses. I picked them up, rubbing my thumb over the cracked lens. Craning my neck back, I saw four more similar shapes strung up on tree branches, like washing put on the line to dry.

I backed away slowly. The hair on my arms prickled. I shuddered. Something cracked behind me and I whirled around to face the source of the sound.

The light illuminated a bloated and blotchy body thrown haphazardly over a tree stump. Something pale and shiny oozed from the openings where a nose and mouth should have been. The right leg, if one could still call it a leg, bent at a ninety-degree angle right below the knee. Purple and black bruises encircled the neck, a morbid piece of adornment on an otherwise porcelain-skinned body.

My mind whirled, trying to make sense of the horrific scene in front of me. I brought my hand to my mouth, swallowing the rising nausea.

“I’ve been waiting a long time for you to stumble upon this place, Deandra.”

Choking back a whimper, I turned my head at the familiar sound of my own voice. I wanted to run.

“Don’t be afraid. It’s your turn now.”

A sudden flash of light blinded me. Wind whooshed through the trees. Skeleton branches shook violently, crashing into each other.

Sharp, talon-like fingers dug into my chest, tearing and ripping. Fiery, white-hot pain shot through my body. I choked and tried to cry out, but the sensation overwhelmed me. My ribs splintered, puncturing my thin skin with ivory slivers. Innards spilled out onto the forest floor, viscera red and slimy. Pink lungs constricted, squeezing tighter and tighter.

I couldn’t breathe.

My knees buckled beneath me. I fell and...

fell...

...and

...

...fell

...

...

She squinted as she left the forest, holding her slender hand up to block the sunlight from her eyes. She looked around the backyard in a daze.

From the house came the sound of a door slamming. A smiling man rushed towards her with arms outstretched.

“I’m so glad you’re back, honey!” He wrapped her in a tight hug, practically lifting her off the ground. “I was so worried. You left for work a week ago and then, poof, you were gone! Just up and vanished.”

“I’m...sorry?”

She wasn’t sure what the proper reply was. How had Deandra usually responded?

“What’s important is that you’re back now. Come on, let’s get you inside and warmed up. You feel as cold as a corpse.”

This man, her husband, chuckled, rubbing her bare shoulders. James. Yes, that was his name. It was coming back to her now.

He was James. She was Deandra. They were married. They’d lived in this house for over five years. She had a job at a care home and liked taking walks and cooking meals. She was Deandra. He was James.

Nothing was wrong with the town, absolutely nothing at all.

JENNIFER SHEPIT (KROBATH)

# Flooded Forest

Much of my current work has been an exploration of how I experience the changing landscape around me, drawing on memories of specific and personal locations in the Fraser Valley, especially in Mission, BC. I have been exploring this through on-site painting, painting places from memory that I have not been to in a long time, and painting places that, in a way, no longer exist. Some of these places can no longer be experienced due to factors like natural changes, new regulations regarding how we can interact with natural environments, development, or even the distortion of time and the fallibility of memory, which can create a false sense of place.

The painting “Flooded Forest” is a part of this ongoing series, and it is inspired by the forests in Mission that were flooded in the early 1900s for hydroelectric power, which became what is known as Stave Lake today. This lake played a huge part in my childhood memories, well before I understood the impact its formation had on the land and people around it. My literal memories of it are, of course, different from the perspective in the painting; the most I could see would have been the tree tops that emerge from the water’s surface, and this would change depending on the water levels throughout the seasons and years. Instead, this painting is a depiction of a part of the lake I can only imagine, and perhaps that is all we can really do. As places change over time, what we can remember of them ceases to exist, and our recollections create new, imaginary versions of our own.

*Medium: Oil on Cradled Wood Panel*

*Dimensions: 30”x40”*

*Year: 2025*



BENJAMIN CROWLEY

# The Great Goose Uprising

Pocket had gone fishing.

That, in and of itself, was far from an unusual occurrence. After all, he did own a fishing boat, and that, in Roscoe's mind, was justification enough for one to go fishing damn near every weekend. If he could get somebody to watch the farm, he even found himself tagging along every now and then.

No, what made this trip special was what he'd caught. See, Roscoe Cochrane had known Paul Sandstrom (better known as Pocket) for thirty years, and for all that time, he'd done the same thing every time he had an opening, and that was to fuck off and go fishing. The weather didn't matter, nor the season. If Roscoe could say one thing about Pocket's prowess as an angler, it was that he was damnably persistent.

If there was one thing that Roscoe *couldn't* say about his oldest friend's fishing prowess, it was his talent. Pocket, despite growing up on a fishing boat and fishing himself with the aforementioned frequency, couldn't catch shit unless a bird flew over his head. So, when he left to go fishing on the first weekend of August, Roscoe didn't expect him to return with much.

He was sorely disappointed.

"Pocket. Why the hell've you got a goddamn goose in your truck?"

"Well, I can't just put it back, can I?"

Roscoe was, to put it mildly, flabbergasted.

"I—yes! You certainly can 'just put it back!' It's a bloody goose! It belongs in the feckin' wilderness! Not your feckin' truck!"

"I don't know about that. I mean, look at it!"

"...How the hell did you even manage to get it in your truck in the bloody first place?!"

"Well, I was fishing, as I do, and it got tangled in my lines, so I, uh, well, reeled it in, so to speak."

Roscoe simply shook his head.

“Why you wouldn’t just toss ‘er back is beyond me, Pocket.”

“Well, look at it! Its wings all mangled!”

The goose, which was indeed short a few feathers off its right wing, chose this moment to attempt escape by slamming bodily into the rear window of the F150’s canopy with enough force to shatter the (admittedly already cracked) glass. Pocket, startled by the sudden presence of a goose in his face where previously there was none, reacted quite understandably and shoved it away, causing it to bounce off the truck’s tailgate, flop onto the ground, and attempt to take off, which roused the attention of Bullet, a Labrador owned by Colton, Roscoe’s son. Bullet, only three years old, yet well into his training, did exactly what one would expect of a gun dog owned by a prolific hunter, and took off like his namesake towards the bewinged interloper.

“Oh, bleedin’ Christ. Bullet! Heel, goddammit!”

The goose made its displeasure at this sequence of events known at a considerable volume, prompting the immediate, Stetson-clad appearance of Bullet’s owner on the front porch.

“Bullet! Leave it!”

The dog, who had previously been little more than a brown streak whizzing down the driveway, skidded to a halt, kicking up no shortage of gravel. A lop-eared glance back at his owner preceded a trot of shame toward the farmhouse’s front porch. The goose, having vanquished his foe, stumble-flew onto the roof of a nearby side-by-side with a triumphant honk. The three men, one dog, and approximately thirteen cats (who had slunk out of the barn, weeds, nearby shed, and from under the ATV itself) all stood and watched, and weighed their options.

“I say we shoot the bastard, and have us some roast goose for dinner. I’ve a shotgun in the barn,” said Roscoe, with his hands on his hips.

“No! We should, I dunno, do something to help it!” Pocket, aghast, exclaimed.

“Like what?” interjected Colton, kneeling beside a salivating Bullet with a hand through the dog’s collar. “Think your window of safely getting it to the SPCA is just about closed.”

“Well, we can’t just leave it here! The dogs’ll get it!”

Roscoe pinched his nosebridge and sighed, speaking slowly, as if explaining a difficult concept to a small child.

“Paul, if we let it go, a coyote, or a bobcat, or an eagle, or even a feckin’ *bear* will almost certainly get it. Look at how much effort it put in just to get on top of that Gator!”

Pocket sighed and looked at his feet, sticking his hands in the fishing vest that gave him his nickname.

“It just doesn’t feel right.”

“I tell ya what. I’ll put the dogs away tonight, and if it’s still here in the morning, we’ll call the SPCA. Sound fair?”

“Did you not just say that a coy—”

“It’s either that or I sic Bullet on it, Paul. Keep in mind, you let this damn goose loose on *my* property!”

“Ugh. Deal.”

The next day, Roscoe woke around half past five, put a pot of coffee on, and stepped out onto his back porch while he waited, in order to watch the sunrise. As the golden rays shone over the emerald waves of corn in his back field, a cygnet symphony rang out.

*It can’t be.*

It was.

Thirty minutes later, a bleary-eyed Pocket stood beside a quietly fuming Roscoe beside the latter’s backyard swimming hole.

“You know—”

“If the next words outta your mouth are *any* variation of ‘I told you so,’ I’m huckin’ you in that pond.”

Before Pocket could provide a retort that would not give the three hundred pound Irish rugby prop a reason to carry out his threat, the second surprise of the morning reared its white-feathered, broad-billed head.

“Oh, great. Now there’s two of them.”

“Now there’s *fecking* two of them.”

“Don’t sh—”

“I’m gonna shoot them.”

“Roscoe!”

“Oh, fine! The fuckers are probably out of season, anyhow,” Roscoe muttered, shaking his head and making his way toward the barn to properly start his day. A bleary-eyed Colton followed suit momentarily, after ensuring that Bullet was firmly situated elsewhere. Pocket, meanwhile, sensing that there was little left for him here, made his way back into town for a new rear windshield.

Later on, as the sun sank low on the horizon, while Pocket was just about to kick back on the couch with a mug of tea and watch History Channel for a few hours before going to bed, his phone rang. It was Roscoe, who had hoped to be doing something quite similar, provided one swapped a couch for a deck chair, tea for a Molson Canadian, and the History Channel for the shenanigans of the approximately six or seven sizable dogs that called the C&R Ranch home. Unfortunately, both men’s plans for a relaxing evening were for naught, as was detailed rather explicitly and at great volume in Roscoe’s phone call to his best friend. Twenty-five minutes later, Pocket once again stood beside his friend, albeit slightly out of arm’s reach lest that morning’s pond-throwing threat be reiterated.

“I don’t understand. Is it migration season?”

“Not for another month at least!”

“Then why are there so many?!”

The two men stood, Roscoe with his hands on his hips and Pocket scratching his chin, as they watched four geese waddling across Roscoe’s front pasture.

“You’ll be happy to know, Paul, that I called me game warden cousin. Connie. She says they’re outta season. I gotta prove they’re sick ‘fore I shoot ‘em, and if I do I can’t eat ‘em.”

“Good? I guess? Still, doesn’t leave us with a ton of options. I mean, there was only the one last night, then two this morning, and now there’s four! At this rate, you’ll have...let’s see, almost nine thousand geese by the end of the week!”

As images of his farm being overrun by nine thousand geese filled

Roscoe's mind, he decided that regulations be damned, he was doing *something* about these blasted geese, *so help me God*. So when he huffed, threw his arms up, and walked off, Pocket was left to stare at the geese, which in turn stared inquisitively at him until he removed what remained of his breakfast—an everything bagel with a fried egg—from his pocket, and threw it to them. *There.*

In the barn, Roscoe was on a mission. He might not be able to shoot the geese but Lord above he would scare them off. *Can't shoot one over their heads, game wardens'll be on me arse for that, so I've got to figure a way to get 'em gone without killin' 'em. Hmm...*

As Pocket watched the geese peck apart his bagel, he found himself wondering where Roscoe'd gone, when a deep, brassy honking sound reverberated around him, and a veritable flock of geese descended on the farm.

Roscoe was rooting around in the barn when a cacophony of chaos arrested his attention, prompting him to turn just in time to see Pocket, running for his life from a flock of geese honking, flapping, and leaving feathers and bird shit all over his farm.

"Jesus sufferin' Christ on a God-be-damned motherfeckin' *cracker*, what the hell did you do?!"

"I don't know! I just gave the ones we already had like, *half* a bagel and then they *all* showed up!"

"Why the *fuck* would you do *that*?!"

"Because I didn't think getting rid of my breakfast would cause the fucking *great goose uprising*!"

Roscoe's answer, composed almost entirely of profanity in both English and Irish, was drowned out by the onslaught of honking from the geese swarming the barn.

It was time for desperate measures.

Situated in the corner of the barn was a mechanic's shop, crowded with greasy parts, milling machines, engine stands, and a handful of old cars in various states of disrepair. One car in particular took the place of honour in the center: a 1969 Ford Torino, stripped down to primer for a fresh coat of blue paint. The interior was ragged, the tires old, and the front bumper was entirely missing. What was present, though, was the four hundred twenty-nine cubic inch Cobra V8 engine, fully assembled and ready to go, albeit with a sizable

portion of its exhaust system missing. Notably, the mufflers.

Roscoe jumped into the driver's seat of the Torino, grabbed the key from the center console, and cranked it over.

Pocket felt time slow down.

Geese honked.

Feathers landed in his hair.

Roscoe muttered curses.

Flapping wings pounded against the roof.

And the mighty V8 roared to life like a fire-breathing dragon, spitting fury out the tailpipes like the wrath of an incensed god. Roscoe pumped the throttle, revving the engine to its redline and back, the bangs and cracks of the backfires echoing with the rumbling roar of all five hundred stampeding horses barely corralled by the Torino's driveline.

The effect was immediate and blessed. The geese, having awoken some ancient primeval horror thought lost to time, decided that they should make their exit most hastily. With a final gunshot pop of the mighty Cobra backfiring, Roscoe shut the Torino down, and sat there behind the wheel a moment, before turning his gaze over to Pocket.

“Next time, just throw the bloody thing back, will ya?”

ALLANA QUIGLEY

# Rot

My legs carry me, one scuffing against the pavement as the other drags me over the curb. I almost stumble, but they catch me. I'm starving, that never changes. Somehow my teeth have stayed intact despite the rot in my gums and the loss of my tongue. My legs stop, straining to keep me upright. Some muscle that must've been important got nicked pretty bad a while ago. It's still hanging on by the flesh.

A noise.

My chest turns towards it first, then my head flops to my other shoulder. I can't remember what dislocated my skull from the spine, but it's been that way for a while. I see a person moving through the clouds in my eyes.

*Fuck.*

My body smells the iron in their blood, it hears them calling to each other. The rest of my body turns in their direction. My legs move again. There are others like me. They're getting louder, gravitating towards the living. Slack-jawed, some missing eyes or limbs, dragging and limping like me, moaning, reaching, their fingernails scraping off on the pavement.

I've done this all before. I hate it. I want to turn around and leave them be. But again, my legs keep moving forward. My arms are outstretched, broken, burnt. My frostbitten fingers are reaching out.

They're climbing a fence. Well, three of them are. One is watching us, both determined and terrified, nothing but brick and cement of the alleyways on either side of them.

I get bumped from behind. A fresher one pushes past the rest of us. It reaches out to grab. It's met with a bullet to the skull.

*Oh boy, here we go.*

They start bickering about the gunshot and how loud it was. The one left on the ground is trying to mediate from below. It's his turn to climb, but he's a bit slow.

*Come on, hurry up! Don't let me do this. I don't want to do this. Please.*

One of us grabs his ankle, he sends his foot through its skull. Must've been rotten. It falls back dead for good this time, knocking down a few others. He manages to throw himself over the fence, landing ungracefully on the pavement.

I get pushed up against the chain-link fence by the others. My skin starts to tear against the dull metal from the pressure of the bodies still trying to advance. My eye, the good one, is squarely in the center of one of the diamonds in the chain-link. At least I can watch until the ones behind me give up. I won't be going anywhere until something else catches their attention.

On the other side two of the living help the one that fell onto his feet. His shoulder is drooping. He gives the smaller one, the one with the gun, a shove with his un-droopy arm, and spits some words at him.

*God, I miss understanding what they're saying.*

Everything sounds canned, now. Like everything is trapped inside something, or like I'm underwater trying to hear what's above. I get the desire to ram sticks through my eardrums to clear them, make the sounds come in better. But even if I had the dexterity left in my hands, I couldn't command them to do it.

I am jolted forward again.

*Will you fuckers give up already?*

I watch through my forced perspective against the fence as the living leave. They're able to walk with purpose, to properly comprehend their surroundings, to communicate with each other, act on desires, and restrain themselves. One of my hands forces its way through one of the links, reaching out for them as they get farther away. The fencing pushes my skin back until it rips, some of whatever meat is left staying behind and revealing the bone as it extends outward. The flesh bunches up at my elbow like a sleeve that's been rolled up too far.

*I'm getting old, and I am rotting.*

KELSEY ROBSON

# Dandelion

My favourite detail about working with plants every day is getting to observe the beauty in their microscopic structures; they form the tapestry of a colourful garden. I am inspired by the resilience, diversity, and interconnectedness of their quiet intelligence.

*Medium: Digital Photography*

*Dimensions: 1080x1620 pixels*

*Year: 2023*



JACK KEATING

# Natural Decline

Gravel stings the underfoot, pink and smooth for now. Granite shards draw blood, the cost of an uninhibited step into wilderness. Pressure on the cut delays the pain while every footfall grinds fresh soil into the wound. Just another dirty sole.

Loose dirt shifts as we struggle to maintain balance, falling, scrambling to stay upright and unharmed. Flying faster downhill, pushing, planting scraped feet on shaky ground. Grasping bare branches for leverage, abandoning self-preservation, don't look down don't dwell on consequences. Why worry? We cannot slow down. Wouldn't dream of it.

Pockets of warm light break through the high canopy to dance on our faces,  
moving across  
eyes and mouths like raindrops on a car window: landing, streaking, whipping  
past.

Sweaty hands pull across a cool rock wall. Proof of the ancient  
foundation hidden under moss. Behind trees,  
concealed. Wild rosemary bushes  
litter the rustic route.

Gnarled driftwood twists, rocked by the gentle surf, waving bleached fingers,  
greeting us  
as we finally arrive to cleanse our cuts in serene saline. Relax, supine  
on sculpted sandstone surfaces. There is no struggle  
here, only satisfied  
smiles.

ALYSSA JONES

# Life in the Dreamhouse

*Content Warning: Domestic Abuse*

Darcy held up two Barbie dolls. She had dressed them both in fancy outfits. Sometimes they went on dates. Most of the time, they did not. The Ken doll was wearing brown pants and a blue shirt. The Barbie doll had long hair and a pink dress. Darcy loved pink. Darcy thought Barbie loved pink too. She had put a lot of care and effort into making them look just right. Ken said Barbie looked very pretty, and Barbie said Ken looked charming. She walked the dolls from the small wood “Dreamhouse” her Dada made for her. She had wanted a real Dreamhouse like some of her friends at school. They had three levels and a slide that went into a plastic pool. She inspected her wood doll’s house. It hadn’t even been painted but it worked alright. Darcy thought she might colour on printer paper and tape some of her own art to the Dreamhouse walls. It might liven the place up. The dolls get into an imaginary car then drive to go on a date. Darcy loved to play Love. It was her favourite game. She loved to pretend that Ken and Barbie loved each other. They go out together, they hug, they kiss. Kissing is kind of gross though, maybe they just hug. Ken and Barbie hold hands when they walk together. Just like Darcy had seen Carter’s mom and dad do. Darcy hadn’t seen Carter in a while. They stopped playing together at school since the last time Carter had come over to play.

The babysitter used to stay all the way to the end of the night, so Darcy had to learn how to make the least amount of noise. When it was bedtime, the babysitter would take a special drink from the top cabinet and step outside to blow smoke from a little white stick while Darcy put on her jammies. When the babysitter was done, she would come upstairs to give Darcy a pack of fruit gummies for being good all evening, and then she would go back downstairs until Mama and Dada came home. She didn’t stay anymore. Instead, she would close the door, go downstairs, pack her bag, and leave. Darcy had to ask for

a night light. Mama and Dada thought it was because she was afraid of the dark, but really Darcy just hated to be alone in the dark. The house was a bit scarier when she was alone in the dark. The dark shapes in her room would make outlines of scary monsters, and every little noise she heard was something trying to get at her. When she finally fell asleep, she would have bad dreams. Dreams where the night goes on forever and Darcy is stuck alone. No one ever comes back for her, no one even notices. She had asked for a princess night light but had ended up with a grown-up night light that had no colours or characters. She thought about how a princess light would have cast a pink haze over her room, painting everything rose-coloured, like living in a dream world. A dream world with a Dreamhouse.

Darcy loved princess movies too. In all of her favourite princess movies, one of two things would happen: the princess would save the day or the hero would save the princess. She preferred when the hero saved the day because she thought saving the day might be a lot of work. She would like it better if a hero saved her. At school, sometimes she would play princess with the other kids, but she had stopped because they never played it quite right. The other kids always wanted to be the ones doing the saving, and it was always from a big monster or a dragon or an evil queen. They liked to be the ones to swoop in to save the day. They liked to be a part of the action. Darcy only cared about how it all ended. She liked the bit where they all lived happily ever after. That part was always the shortest though. Darcy played alone. She played in the “happily ever after” zone for as long as she wanted, which, generally, was most of her playtime.

She turned her attention back to her dolls. They talked and laughed. Ken and Barbie had a perfect date. They drove back home to their “Dreamhouse.” There was no one left behind in the Dreamhouse. It was just the two of them. Life was always better when it was just the two of them and there was no one else to look after. The front door opened and they stepped inside.

She heard the front door open downstairs, it squeaked, and she knew playtime was over. The door slammed and she flinched. Heavy steps thundered through the house and screaming followed. Mama and Dada yelled at each other. This was how all the dates ended. Maybe they kept going so they could pretend it would end differently. Maybe they both wanted a hero to come save them, but neither one wanted to do the saving. Darcy couldn't hear the words,

but the sounds were loud and her breathing sped up. Her heart beat heavily inside her chest, and she knew she needed to get back into bed before they came upstairs to check on her. Then again, after a night like this, they usually forgot to. She looked down at her dolls, dressed in their fanciest clothes. Mama and Dada loved each other, she knew that. They didn't love each other like Carter's mom and dad, and they didn't love each other like the princes loved the princesses, but what else could it be? This was what love was, and this was what love did. Ken and Barbie were home from their date, what then? The night light flickered. More yelling, a crash, and a bang. Someone threw something, she heard it hit the wall and shatter. Playtime was over. She ended their date like all dates ended. Darcy lifted Ken's arm, and Ken hit Barbie. Barbie cried, and Ken left the dream house.

CALEB DAVIDSON

# a peaceful apathy (my grandfather died today)

my mom cried until my shoulder  
squelched with snot.  
the drive to the funeral was hard  
because I couldn't let any happy songs play  
and my playlist has so many of them.  
at the wake I stopped to think  
about the legacy he left me  
and it's just an aquamarine '94 ranger  
in a junkyard somewhere  
and a 22 that'll appreciate being cared for  
when I finally get around to cleaning it.  
my girlfriend asked if I was okay  
on the drive back  
and I think it's fucked up that I didn't lie  
when I said I was.

to a Davidson who did what he could,  
stood giant on his own two feet until he fell  
like a cedar in the mountains.  
I'll carry both the rumble and the rot  
far beyond your resting place.  
may the cork boots never waterlog  
where you're going, Gill.

JANE ROBINSON

# Maybe That's Just Me

*Content Warning: Self Harm and Suicide*

I wake in my dark room;  
the curtains block out the faint memory  
that the sun once rose.  
The walls ooze that stinking smell  
of death I know all too well.  
Or maybe it's just me.  
My heart cries.

I stumble into the bathroom;  
the mirror reflects back the bags under  
my eyes which are narrowed into slits.  
I brush my teeth while watching  
the corpse in front of me.  
Or maybe that's just me.  
My gums bleed.

I sat there on the bus;  
staring out the window, I watch life flash by  
while past and future blur into the present.  
Every moment that passes  
is a new plague on the world.  
Or maybe that's just me.  
My eyes well up.

I arrive home late;  
I stayed to finish a project for some reason.  
I still got here before you.  
I curl in the tub,  
cold, hard ceramic doing nothing to save me.  
Or maybe it's just me.  
My wrists bleed.

That's where you find me;  
sprawled out across the linoleum flooring.  
I realized that I didn't want to die too late.  
Us humans often think we're doing good  
until we hit the point of no return and die.  
Or maybe that's just me.  
Your heart cries.

CARMEN MOLINA

# Clean & Twenty

Materials used: acrylic, scrap fabric, hot glue, mod podge, pearl ribbon, florets, sewing needle, charm, mini portrait, flower button, fake blood.

This is a personal piece representing being clean from selfharm.

- ☞ vintage golden angel pin, representing my niece, Helena Liliana
- ☞ vintage scissors, gifted by Mackenna True
- ☞ dried baby's breath, gifted by Julia Falk
- ☞ green aventurine, peridot, rose quartz, gifted by my mother
- ☞ lace, gifted by Olivia Livingstone
- ☞ sailboat earring, gifted by Jessi Bayda
- ☞ rusted blade from Owen Burnstaad

*Medium: Mixed Media Self Portrait on Canvas*

*Dimensions:*

*Year: 2024*



JULIA COLEMAN

# ode to the heart

oh, careful creature  
that red thumping  
piece inside  
little sorrow-holder, dream  
keeper, beating  
and encased behind  
this big cage  
like breathing ivory,  
doesn't stop beating  
and feeling, steady  
or  
racing, little grief-lover  
and mind-believer  
lead you down  
its chambers where  
you find something  
from ten years  
ago, like that time your  
brother dragged you by  
your heels down the—  
maybe laughter or  
terror echoing in the stairwell—  
steps,

or five years ago when  
you both ran up them, and whoever  
could slam their door loudest  
won. oh, reckless thing  
urges you to run  
down barefooted, feverish  
fresh-hot pavement,  
in the rain, and just  
remember what it's like  
outside of the droning  
and moaning of  
customers or those stupid  
fluorescent lights that  
are everywhere, oh  
doting and courageous  
heart doesn't stop beating and  
let's you sing out  
of pitch, let's you hear  
loved ones sing  
even more out of it, and then  
swell in how easy they are  
to adore, sweet enduring heart  
reduces and reduces and  
never fully becomes

unidentifiable, never  
fully diminishes or loses  
resolve, no matter  
if you push on it (pull  
your finger away and find on  
it a gushy red stain),  
shove it like an old  
ugly toy (you can't  
muster to give away) into your  
closet, or scream  
into it like a pillow,  
holds you and holds you  
and endures again, again, red  
thumping, doesn't stop  
doesn't stop  
holds on to parts of you  
given away,  
little sorrow-holder, dream  
-keeper.



CAITLYN CARR

# cancer knows when the holidays are

you sit on a comfy chair  
without a sparkling red and white suit  
or a bedazzled belt. your beard  
might stay, but it will never  
be as long as the fake one you wore  
ten or fifteen years ago

when you sat on a different  
comfy chair  
surrounded by coworkers  
dancing annually in red and green,  
who asked you for things  
that they were once too young to write  
in their childhood letters.

this year, you're surrounded by people  
who instead ask what *you* want for christmas;  
a warm blanket?  
a plastic cup of apple juice?  
help getting to the bathroom?  
you sit on that comfy chair  
uncomfortably  
and i swear  
in the beeping of your IV pump  
somehow  
i hear a laugh

JJ INDIGO

# Under the Same Stars

This photo was taken at Sombrio Beach on B.C.'s Juan De Fuca trail, where I slept under the brightest star-filled sky I've ever seen. The Milky Way was visible to the naked eye, the water beat against the rocks, and ferries glowed in the distance as they passed. I took this while drinking coffee and wondering which people I loved, in the past, present, and future, were also sitting out under the same stars.

*Medium: Digital Photograph*

*Dimensions: 5254x3503 pixels*

*Year: 2025*



MACKENNA TRUE

# Holy Ghost, River Church

Cinnamon skyline crusades west, spitting itself down onto stained glass sage and cerulean, swirling in its scarlets and crimsons. Soiled communion of chips and clearance cheese-stuffed smokies cooked on a stick sharpened for sport, my brother focused on smoothing out one for our sister. He sweeps his curly shavings off their shared camping chair, sticking to her sweater seared by sparks, and his too-small sneakers scuffed with ashy sand. Squinting through smoke, we notice a distant excitement surge down the shore. Struggling to keep up with our father's stern strides, we succumb to his curiosity.

Standing knee-deep in the darkening river, two men in suspended wetsuits obsess over their new prize, subdued sturgeon lying exhausted in their strong arms.

Standing shyly behind our father, we stare at this quiet creature catching his breath. His glassy, speckled skin shines through the water's surface, soaking in this setting sun.

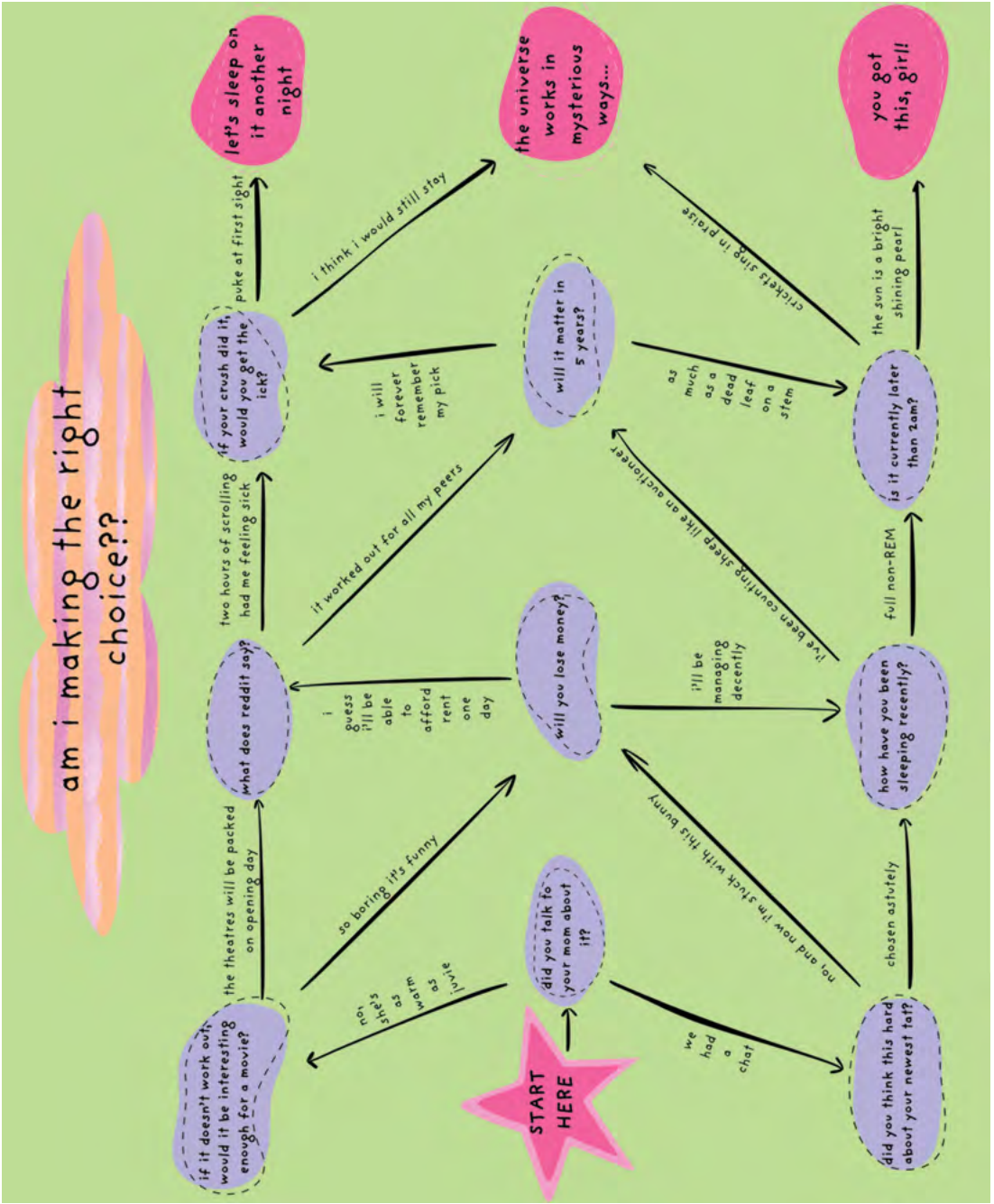
Goosebumps from equal parts awe and the climbing chill of September nights creep over our skinny arms. The sun falls behind the bridge, and I swear I see him sleepily watch as the slight sliver of sun disappears into its own slumber. Slowly shutting his eyes, he misses one of the men passing our father a camera. We stay where we are, too scared to sacrifice our safety for fatherly comfort. I stand saddened by my father's small compliance in the momentary abduction of this sweet sturgeon. At only ten and still skeptical of strangers, I want to scream, *Please let this big fish free, release him back to his century of solitude.* But I do not. They take their picture, and let him go.

Standing with my arms crossed and tears on my cheeks, the men admire the pictures and ignore the sturgeon's sleepy swim back home. He fades into the river, knowing this won't be the last time.

Standing in shock, my sister's sticky hand meets mine as our father leads us back to our fire, all of them rushing to share this story with our mother. I count sturgeons to soothe myself to sleep that night, seething in my sensitivity for keeping me awake.

MACKENNA TRUE

am i making the right  
choice??.



ANNA MCCAUSLAND

# Religiously

Arms raise in  
falsified ways,

moving to the hymns  
of our childhood.

Tequila blood.  
Lime body.

We break bread  
repeatedly.

Prayers whispered in confessionals.  
Bare knees land

on sticky hassock  
between purges.

Drunken atonement  
slurred from the stall door.

Cement pews frigid  
on the back of our thighs.

In reverence we  
sip holy water,

earnestly exorcising  
our demons

before a sloppy  
processional home.

We gather,  
just not in the way our parents want.

XAVIER IBRAHEEM

# Revelation #754

I'm scared of losing my wisdom  
teeth, my wisdom is stored there.

I'm anxious about passing on  
experience in bloodied gums.  
To lose part of yourself, I'm told, is growth.  
Isn't that the best part about living?

Being able to let go means forgetting  
shared cigarettes on the way to sushi restaurants,  
on the porches,  
outside the apartment buildings,  
always walking through doorways  
the thresholds for *elsewhere*.

I've imagined myself bleeding out in the snow, the usual  
man-fantasy  
while missing out on the party in the back  
since I'm in the front of the uber.  
I stick my head out the car window

despite the driver's protests, I let the rain  
dribble softly on my face while the city lights  
blend into a loose stream of fluorescent colour,  
the world seems more comprehensible, whole  
under the amour of the late-night drunken drive.

My tongue lingers on the pain of the cavity.

I live my life through vicarious suicide,  
wondering between the sessions of talking with friends  
and washroom trips  
if I choked on the seatbelt, would you save me?

Safety, comfort, incites rebellion,  
the boredom of normalcy, quiet  
invites a noisemaker to,  
you know, perpetuate chaos theory—  
I ponder all of this outside my neighbourhood pub  
watching my life shrink away like this  
cigarette in my hand:  
a wavering brightness burning itself out,  
waiting to be used or snuffed.

# Biographies

**Megan Ali** is an emerging visual artist and a graduating student at the University of the Fraser Valley. Her work explores self-perception, embodiment, and spirituality through mixed media, sculpture, and painting. It focuses on vulnerability, awareness, and the search for deeper meaning. She can be found on Instagram @megs.art.space.

**Kay Ber** is an artist, photographer, and curator-in-training who recently graduated from the University of the Fraser Valley, School of Creative Arts. She has a passion for creativity and has had her work shown in galleries across the Lower Mainland. Her up-to-date creative practices can be found on Instagram @kaybercreative

**Caitlyn Carr** is a fourth-year English student currently working as an editor for UFV's student press. Her previous work has been published in *EVENT*, *The Cascade*, and *Louden Singletree*. Caitlyn currently resides on the unceded territory of the Stó:lō Peoples.

**Julia Coleman** is a first-year student at UFV, currently studying creative writing. She spends most of her time in headphones discovering cool music, absorbing as much sun as possible, and cooking new recipes. Her main dream is to leave a long-lasting impact on those around her.

**Benjamin Crowley** is a second-year English Major at UFV. Ben enjoys rowing for the UFV Cascades, dressing like he's a cowboy, and playing Warhammer. He can be found on Instagram and Threads @genuine\_benuine

**Caleb Davidson** is an English major with a deep love for words. He enjoys anything that makes him feel smart, or allows him to connect with people. Writing scratches both of those itches, which is why he's been doing it for nearly all his life.

**Carly Fleming** is a recent alumna of UFV. Having completed a BA in Creative Writing, she hopes to pursue writing on the side while she works toward becoming an elementary school teacher. For her, there are few purer joys than the ability and freedom to create.

**Olivia Harks** is an oil painter whose work explores emotion, modern mythology, and the human experience. Olivia studied Architecture at Auckland University in New Zealand, graduating with her Masters. She lived in Australia and America before moving to Canada. You can see her work on Instagram @oliviaharksart or at [www.oliviaharks.com](http://www.oliviaharks.com)

**Xavier Ibraheem** is a student from Mission studying English Literature at the University of the Fraser Valley. When not scrawling poems down, Xavier oscillates between obsessions but frequently returns to being haunted by philosophical ideas. His previous work can be found in the 2024 Issue of *Louden Singletree*.

**JJ Indigo** is a recent UFV graduate with an English major and a concentration in creative writing. Some of her previous work can be found in former editions of *Louden Singletree*, and she can be found on Instagram @indigos.diaries.

**Bonnee Irene** is a student at the University of the Fraser Valley studying English Literature and Philosophy. She is a cat mom, and in her spare time she enjoys reading, hiking, and watching comfort tv shows.

**Alyssa Jones** is a creative writing student at the University of the Fraser Valley who believes words hold tremendous power. When not writing novels or poetry, she is cafe hopping for the perfect iced latte and joyfully worshipping Jesus, who is the source of her creativity and hope.

**Caitlyn Jones** is a psychology major, sociology minor, who is in her final semester at UFV and is an aspiring grief counsellor. She is a new artist who discovered her love for drawing while at UFV. Outside of school, she loves music, thrifting, and spending time with family and friends.

**Jack Keating** is a student of English and creative writing at UFV. He's grateful to his friends and instructors for putting up with him, and to his family and incredible partner, Katie, for supporting him. His work has been published in *Louden Singletree*, the *Brave Voices* chapbook, and *The Miramichi Reader*.

**Halle Kimber** is a student at the University of the Fraser Valley studying English. When not writing or studying, Halle enjoys baking and watching films.

**Carlye Krul** is a student currently studying English and creative writing. When Carlye's not busy penning her next novel, she's most likely haunting bookstores or drinking espresso. She can be found on her Instagram @yourlocalsnailfren.

**Kaitlin Kuzik** is a student in the Bachelor of Arts program at UFV majoring in English. She enjoys reading and writing science fiction in her spare time.

**Stevie Laycoe-Thompson** is a student at UFV studying creative writing and philosophy. She enjoys gardening, nature, and reading, and she can usually be found with some type of chocolate treat. Her dog, Henry, is always at her side, which often influences her writing.

**Anna McCausland** is a creative writing student living on the unceded territories of the Sumas (Semá:th) and Matsqui (Máthxwi) peoples. Her writing has been featured in *Zapta Zine*, *The Cascade* and *Louden Singletree*. She loves writing in multiple formats and hopes to continue to write whatever pops into her head.

**Carmen Molina** is a lover of all things beautiful. When she's not at school, she can be found creating art, writing poems, adventuring with her fiancé, or playing mermaids in the lake with her bestie.

**Allana Quigley** is currently studying creative writing at the University of the Fraser Valley. She has a cat, a dice collection, and a soft spot for fictional monsters. Yes, she's still working on that "thing" she's been meaning to write.

**Jane Robinson** is currently studying chemistry at the University of the Fraser Valley. Jane loves writing as a hobby, and she hopes to get more of her pieces published in the future.

**Kelsey Robson** is a student at UFV studying English, visual art, and floral design. She lives in Aldergrove and works at a local specialty rose nursery.

**Jennifer Shepit (Krobath)** was born and raised in Mission and now lives in Abbotsford, where she has worked from a home studio since graduating from UFV with a visual arts diploma in 2005. Inspired by everyday surroundings, nature, and mundane interactions, she works primarily with oil and watercolor, but often experiments with new media and loves collaborating with other artists.

**Sarah Sovereign** is a neurodivergent artist and therapist in the Fraser Valley, using photography to explore themes of grief, memory, and storytelling. You can find her at [www.sarahsovereign.com](http://www.sarahsovereign.com), [www.thecreativecounsellor.ca](http://www.thecreativecounsellor.ca) and on Instagram under @sarahsovereign.

**Mackenna True** is a spunky gal who is just happy to be here. She thoroughly enjoys playing dress-up, working backstage in theatre, and watching 2+ hour-long video essays. She also enjoys writing. When she's not busy with school, work, and theatre (blegh boring), you can find her scouring the Value Village book aisle, or soundly sleeping and dreaming of playing dolphins with her bestie.

*Louden Singletree* is UFV's literary and visual arts journal. Since its inception in 2009, the *Louden Singletree* has been a forum in which students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the university can share their creative work

## CONTRIBUTORS:

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