



1000 WORDS

HOME NOT HOME

Project & Exhibit



Living back when I was made to visit Jan family love asked me "Where do I ask me where I'm a quality of home that Not only I haven't give family in two years... I City That is in Calif

We love you
Rosita
Glad your back

BALANCING ACT



Pilsen Arts & Community House

May 3 – June 2
2024

AnySquared Projects



Pilsen Arts & Community House | 1637 W 18th Street

About the Project

The **1000 Words: Home Not Home Exhibition** features artists' works inspired by writers' submissions and is on display at the PACH Gallery May 3rd–June 2nd. The project also features a poster series wheatpasted in our neighborhoods and on the streets.

The **Home Not Home Project** examines the complicated dichotomies of the idea of home and explores ideas of the world we want! Home Not Home investigates themes of belonging/ not belonging, freedom/ captivity, safety/ danger, comfort/ discomfort, inclusive/ exclusive, building/ destroying, and place/ displacement. Home Not Home aims to demonstrate that while the concept of home is universal, the experience is very personal.

Both the project and exhibition is a collaboration between **AnySquared Projects** and **Pilsen Arts & Community House**.

Online Catalog | homenothome.anysquared.org

Artist + Writers

- Noa Alemán + Tamar Brooks | 3
- Jacqueline Almaguer + Alanis Castillo Caref | 4
- Lexi Alvarado + Isabela Ortega | 6
- Danielle Arend + Janina Gatilao | 8
- Sofia Brunwin + Spencer Hutchinson | 10
- Andrea Cole + Rocio Franco | P12
- Lydia Collins + Tarnynon Onumonu | P13
- Gregory Diaz + Irvin Ibarra | P14
- Danielle Dykerhouse + Betsy Van Die | 16
- Jonathan Espinoza + ben-aki | 18
- Jaymes Fedor + Maria Requena | 19
- Samantha Franco + Angeles Rangel | 20
- Ines Gardea + Angelica Davila | 21
- Frank Geiser + Penny Mann | 22
- Stephanie Herrera + Neha Chawla | 23
- Evelyn Hernandez + Valeria Osornio | 24
- Ivana Jarmon + Theo Sullivan | 26
- Vivian Jones + Luz Silva | 28
- Lewis Lain + Thulasi Seshan | 30
- Cesar Luna + benedicta m badia | 31
- Marie Magnetic + Jasmine Rodriguez | 32
- Delisha Mckinney + Paloma Velasco | 34
- Diana Noh + Juj-Lepe | 36
- Andrew Rehs + Corbett Berger | 37
- Clau Rocha + Maria Jose Ramos Villagra | 38
- Amyia Ross Brittanii Batts (Tanae b) | 39
- Fawaz Sakaw + Arianna Maggio | 40
- Lucero Sanchez + Clay-Cofre | 42
- Ramin Takloo-Bighash + Yiwen-Lyu | 44
- TEEL ONE + Melody Contreras | 46
- Pamela Trejo + Kim Yeoh | 48
- Cindy Uriostegui + Scum Drop | 49
- Ami Vasilopoulos + Stephanie Cruz Rincon | 50
- Ivy Waegel + Aryn Hills | 52
- Emily Schroeder Willis + Angelica Flores | 54
- Raine Yung + Micaela Petkus | 55

Art by Noa Alemán + Poem by Tamar Brooks



Noa Alemán, *Una Memoria Contigo*, 2024. Watercolor on Paper.

To the Laundry Room

by Tamar Brooks

This hallway smell
of Grandma's house
of carpet lush and white

of muffled footsteps
not to wake
the uncle who works nights

of sunlight through
a skylight poured
of games not elsewhere found

of ice cream cones
and cookie dough
and walks around the pond

of stained glass quilts
on matching beds
and tapes of handy ways

of submarines
and plumbing woes
and laughter's tears in spades

Within this breath
it's all still there
not packed and stored away

This hallway holds
the honeyed glow
that lit those happy days

Art by Jacqueline Almaguer +
Poem by Alanis Castillo Caref



Jacqueline Almaguer. *Corazon Entre Dos Tierras*, 2024. Acrylic on canvas.

How do you say, not single, not taken, not a box, or a paper
by Alanis Castillo Caref

In our countries
they hate to see us loving.

First time I saw you
against the bed
of a motel hell- room,

hair a mess,
the devil herself
giving you head,
you
touching my legs
and kissing me on the face,
little horns growing from our foreheads,
was heaven.

Our love is made up of night
creatures
and bodies
with fingers
in me
dripping,
hearts too big for two people,
refusing to shrink ourselves
for something so un-cosmic and human,
we make ourselves big.

Millions of miles away,
falling asleep on facetime,
you WhatsApp text me,

how was your day?
I ask you
who is she
out of curiosity
and fighting every bit of jealousy,
speaking
in amor/es like a name,
and fucks-shit,
no mames
calling you bitch, but really
“just playing, baby.”

Giving polyams
polly pockets playing house
a new meaning.

They'd tell us God says
we are only good for sex
when we become
baby-producer breeders and
money-makers
for them,

our countries
don't give a fuck about love.
I say,
trying to hide behind
the labels on your passport,
how do you say
the marriage is not a scam,
with a black ink pen,
in a box you check,
a piece of papel
that is green
or a visa that you need
so they don't slaughter you like butcher meat
hanging
in this country.

This country,
this earth,
keep telling me,

la migra will know
if you've fucked someone else.

They can smell it.

Calling us
cochinos,
cochinos,
if you were a woman,
a muchachita,
una chica,
we'd be fine.

Not to marry us feels like a hate crime.

¿And how do you say,
mamacita, mi vida, traviesa, chingar
mi cielo, perreo, culona, chichona,
chulita, mamón, cabrón, pendeja,
bebecita, maricón, frikitona, coger,
sin madre sin padre sin perro que me ladre,
ya está, ya está, ya está,
en inglés?

We speak a different language,
but our tongue is the same;
when we say “I love you,”
it is more than a phrase.

¿How do you say
how do you say
how do you say,
amar?

Art by Lexi Alvarado + Prose by Isabela Ortega



Lexi Alvarado, *Sweet Memory*, 2024. Acrylic on Panel.

by Isabela Ortega

On the one hand, I can admit that seat belts are the safe way to go. The thought of being tossed around in an accident with abandoned french fries and dust bunnies is enough to make me crave the click of security. On the other hand, the generous rash that sits diagonally on my neck at the end of every other car ride says otherwise. In some cities, the only remnants of painted solid and dotted lines marking the streets now exist as potholes and a need for extra vigilance, seat belts were always a waste of time here. Turn signals might as well be a flashing Las Vegas sign, "CUT ME OFF" twinkling back at you. I'm led to believe that these drivers have been blessed. Because I have yet to hear about a single car crash and the best seat of every ride remains consistent: holding on for dear life to something, anything, in the bed of a truck as we speed down main roads, or squished between a cousin sandwich; 3 underneath, 1 on top, in a 2-person car on our way to the baile.

We share much of the same mountains, pollution, emotions, and murderous desert, yet the whole car unbuckles the second we cross that line in the sand, automatic gate arms raise as if winding up for the tightest hug saying "welcome home." Back to the land of guardian angels protecting the streets and endless childhood. Never mind the countless sandwiches you sacrificed to stray dogs or the stares and loud whispers about your alienism. Daily mangoes prepared with chile or blue sugar that leave hands sticky and dripping heal any ailment. With each passing day, the words will return and it'll become easier to ask abuelita, tita in my case, for more stories in the only tongue she knows. I've waited patiently for them.

But why did the words escape so quickly? I asked the chip dealer for my fix every middle school morning and have fewer fingers than quinceañeras I was asked to be in, so I was never out of practice. These Midwest teachers permeate Southwest roots declaring "NO SPANISH IN THE CLASSROOM" to fulfill white savior fantasies. "I need to know if you're talking bad about me" they announce as I ask the homie beside me for a pencil in our language of hot meals and tough love. I've kindly corrected their extra L as they write my name for the dozenth time, they must be doing this on purpose. I can taste how badly they want to make me Elizabeth, much like my grandfather Guadalupe became Wally, tío Miguel became Michael, and grandma Mercedes is now Mercy. Language of exile that taught me to love like waves.

I yearn to not have to italicize myself, provide the footnotes to my guts and give you the password to my heart. To translate these complexities is to sift out its true meaning. You see, our nonfiction is magical realism. I understand that you find my words to be bland because you do not understand it right here and there and here and here and here. But maybe if you listen, you will finally let me take your hand and guide you through the landscape of torres and azucar and Parangaricutirimícuaro. I must warn you, you may be left with a craving for more that leaves hot welches on your tongue. If you get a chance to truly encounter my abuelita's native lingo, and you listen close enough to the rolling of my r's, inside them you might just find the bumpy roads of laughter and love-stained glass fingers.

Art by Danielle Arend + Poem by Janina Gatilao



Danielle Arend, *Viajar mi Cuerpo*, 2024. Oil paint on canvas.

Viajar mi Cuerpo (Part 1) by Janina Gatilao

Pelo

She falls down to the midpoint of my back.
Her body is broad, bushy, and black.
She stretches and takes up space.
She forbids to be tamed.
Her strands curl into
the air, grasping
matter around
her. Asking
to be seen
but
mama
rakes her into
three sections. Pulling
her arms and legs into a tight braid.
Mama's fingernails scraping into her body
bounding her strands, slicking her back, and
silencing her frizz.
They say black hair,
Nappy hair, Big hair, pelo like hers is unacceptable. Pelo
Like mine.

She is a distraction.

Cuello

Mother Mary rested on my neck.
On a bedding of blush and baby blue.
She is golden like the sun
in history & in price—a fortune.

Dancing around mi cuello, is
the tiniest of thread
Weaving one hoop to another.
Like her, it was gentle.

I remember when I moved here,
the first day of school...
He said my necklace was pretty.
I said thank you.
He said my accent was pretty.
But he was the one with the accent

And he kept getting closer.
His hands rising higher.
And in seconds...
I felt Mother Mary

torn off my neck.
Stolen off my body.
And he ran.

It has been said.
That Mother Mary has been taken bodily into Heaven.
I hope so.

Piel

When they describe a skin like mine
It is always compared to food & drink
Dark like coffee.
Creamy like chocolate.
Sweet like caramel.

When they say they are too pale
They spend time in the sun
On a tanning bed
And they wish they had
caramel, coffee, and chocolate

But sometimes, they point out
That my caramel is burnt
My coffee is bitter
My chocolate is dark

And they look at me
And they look away from me
A distasteful flavor

What they ask for, but not what they wanted.
Boca

When you taste English for the first time,
it feels like you open your mouth too wide.
Your teeth and your tongue are working at
different speeds.

When you taste English for the first time,
it will always feel like the first time,
because you can never remember
why the words are backwards.

When you taste English for the first time,
they always ask, "What?"
but it sounds like
"whaaaaa-TTT".

When you taste English for the first time,
you forget that there are not words
for feelings you have...

so, when they taste your Spanish
I feel pena ajena
because they take my words,
they use a hard D,
they do not roll their R's,
and they pronounce the G's and H's.
I feel embarrassed for them.
But they probably feel embarrassed for me too.

Cambios

Mama and I do not
talk about sex.

Mama and I do not
talk about periods.

Mama and I do not
talk about los cambios
en el cuerpo de una mujer.

I know it did not happen overnight
but one day I noticed my breasts were bigger
and I had hairs sprouting from my armpits
my groin, my upper lips
like nasty wires.
Long, curly, black and thick.

The strangest part was the change inside me.
It felt like burning, pounding, squeezing,
screaming, clenching, ripping.
And when I looked in my
underwear, there was blood.
So much blood.
So much blood.

"¡Mama, me estoy muriendo!"

She ran to the bathroom
slammed the door open,
Took one look at me.
My legs spread,
panties down,
tears in my eyes.

She just shook her head.
She pulled open a drawer,
unleashing a violent pink box,
and handing it to me.

She left and closed the door.

Mama and I do not
talk about los cambios
en el cuerpo de una mujer.

Art by Sofia Brunwin + Poem by Spencer Hutchinson



Sofia Brunwin, *Where we meet*, 2024. Mixed media collage, acrylic, and ink marker.

Uncertain Terrain by Spencer Hutchinson

Where do we meet you and I?
We've come from the same world,
lands apart.

Separated by causeways,
rivers, hills, and used
car dealerships.

Tethered together by vines
of Kudzoo. A plant so
ubiquitous and so foreign
to the land we admit to share,
but so seldom dare
to embrace
in the eyes of our
Northern cousins.

Where is The South
in the world?
On the globe it's
north of the equator.
mild, Serene,
sweet, sour,
soft, hardly perfect.

It's just right
in the middle.

But the twang
is the sound of
Motion-sick mountain drives
and stern silent glares
if you don't mind
your manners.

It doesn't matter that
we stopped using the
N-word.
That George Wallace
Repented.
That grand-paw cried with
company in the living room
because it's too
hard to change.

We have skyscrapers,
malls, museums.
We have everything we need
for geeks, gooks, krauts,
japs, frogs, towel-heads,
and Afro-Americans.

We can feed and clothe and
house our own and
our visitors too.

There hasn't been a lynch
mob in ages, and mama
loves her new black
baby!

So what does it take to
Love OUR home?
The land of color?

Corn flower blue,
Big Orange,
the Crimson Tide,
where folks like things
Chicken Fried?

The land of Blue Grass,
Golden-rod and indigo.

Yellow bellies,
red clay,
red necks,
blacks, whites
and browns?

Where August is as long
as the drawl and about
twice as thick in
The Smokies,
the French Broad,
and on the Delta.

Where hearts are open,
and minds are too.
Where mouths take pride
in what hands can do.

What does it take to Love
this land?
This people called 'trash'.

Why is it okay only to
hate her?

The big and broad,
skinny and long,
missing toothed,
big footed
bare back blue eyed blonde?

With her frail features,
warm heart, and pale hands,
she consumes the shame and agency
of all who wash up on
her newly swept door step.

She answers the door
in a night shirt after
it's far too late for visitors.
And we come inside,
and try to claim her.

To wash the indelible stains
out of her linens. We
try to claim her first in our
hearts when we are alone
staring at a ceiling fan on a
hot night with no AC,
plagued by mosquitoes
and a mysterious itch.

We want to claim her first
before Scottish, Irish, German,
Anglo, or Cherokee Indian.

Are we too just as foreign
to this land and just as despicable
as this vine that binds us to her?

It's a hard thing to acknowledge
that this place now is what is,
and is all that it is.
It will never change, it will
never go quietly from our hearts
and leave us in peace in this
'better' place in which we have
found each other,
to be neighbors yet again.

Yet here we are, voluntary refugees
from home in a better place
with culture.

Where you don't have to say grace
before dinner,
or go to Church on Sunday.

But for all this, we still
share the mark of our lesser race
in the freckles and moles that
are upon our face.

We come from a shamed,
Un-visible place.
And we will never call it by its name...

not even once.

Art by Andrea Cole + Poem by Rocio Franco



Andrea Cole – NILAM Taché Art *Coming Soon*, 2024. Acrylic, mixed media.

How I Explain Gentrification To My Daughter

by Rocio Franco

We walk down 18th Street
and observe a flock of vultures
deep in the cavity
of a recovered wasteland.
Now an area with charm,
culture, and palatable tacos.

18th Street used to be rough
like bricks in rubble,
blocks hot to the touch,
streets buried
in divestment,
and big-city neglect.

Chicago allows us to cocoon
in our hoods until they
metamorphose into neighborhoods.
Property emerging cheap
to turn into a gallery, brewery,
or some fusion bullshit.

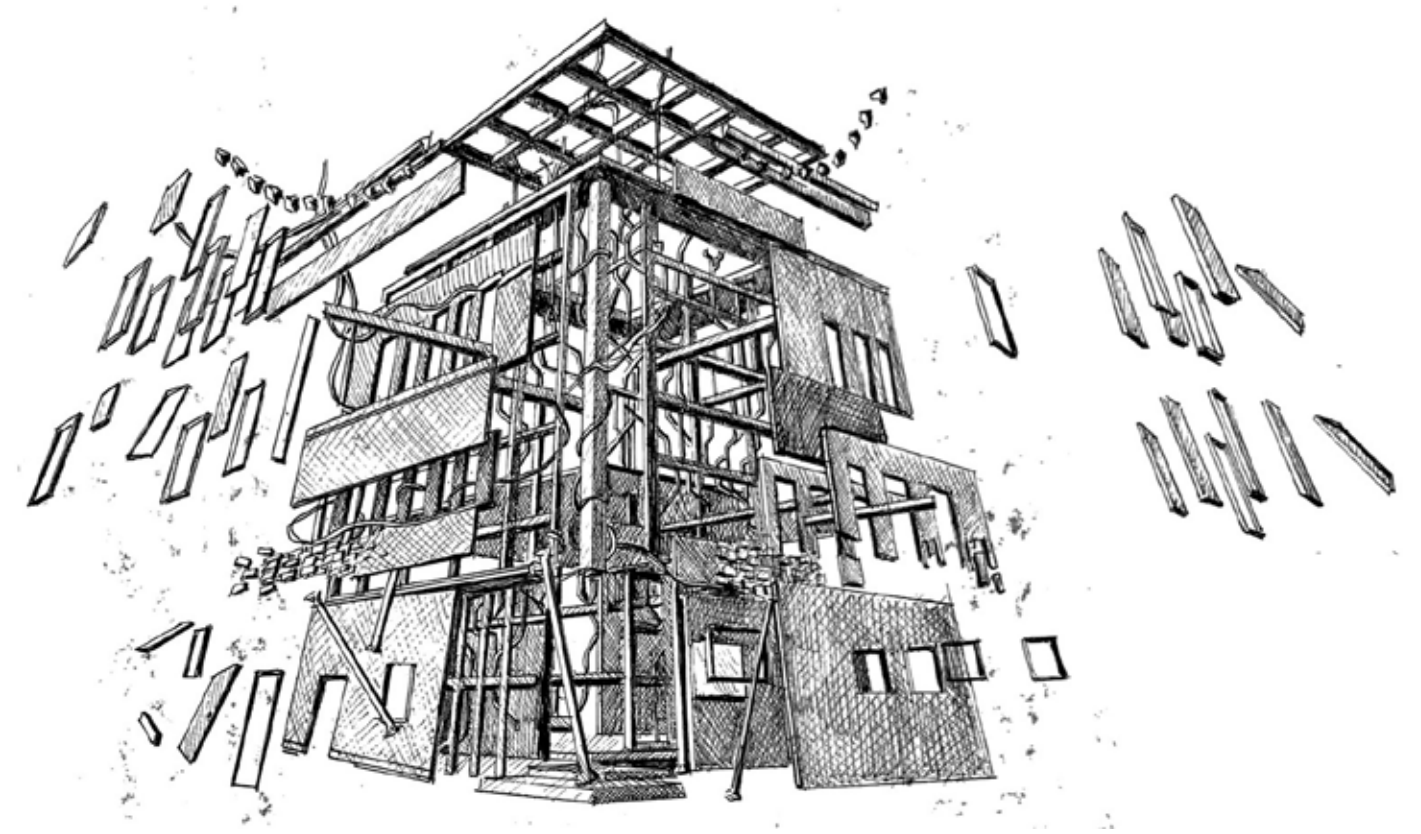
Those vultures
who now flock safely
will never understand
how I found Love as I sat
on a tuft of brown grass
in Harrison Park.

How the paletero
signaled summer
with his cartful
of rainbows and fire
hydrant waves was
our only way to swim.

How my favorite taqueria
introduced me to tongue.
That it can be savored,
and not something
they can peck
into silence.

Our home was never a wasteland.
This is sacred ground
full of swift-hand migrants
and first-gen hustlers
who refuse to be displaced
or gorged on like prey.

Art by Lydia Collins + Poem by Tarnynon Onumonu



Lydia Collins, *Deteriorating, Building*, 2024. (Detail) Pen on Paper.

Circling

by Tarnynon Onumonu

treading cycles
whittling wood whilst wilting
we deteriorate while building
then comes the collapse
an abominable sand trap
and they say at once
there was life here
home here
all reduced to dust

Art by Gregory Diaz + Prose by Irvin Ibarra



Gregory Diaz, *Growing with Music*, 2024. Mixed Media: Cigar box, wood coffee stirrers, copper wire, jewelry wire, florist wire, mirror, hot glue sheer jewelry pouch, and random accessories.

The day the music stopped

by Irvin Ibarra

I don't remember much from the time I was a kid, but I remember that face I'd see in the mirror. The reflection of that once Stubborn Child I was.

You know the one.

The kid who wouldn't eat anything their mother would cook if it were colored a crimson red or creamy green.

The kid who ducked away from family pictures and hated being sung Happy Birthday for whatever reason.

The kid who made an outing such an inconvenience and ignored the music their parents played on the radio.

But they never truly ignored the melody that played on the countless car rides. Even if they could, you'd always feel the volume in your chest. Getting home, sitting on the cold wooden floor with the bedroom door shut with more desire to listen.

And I listened. So much of my youth wrapped around soothing music over arguments I wasn't meant to hear. The beats from drums which served as cover for whatever happened downstairs, and the güiro which stuck alongside the muffled crying in the other room.

As I grew older, I kept listening to the now nostalgic music that served as a reminder of those simpler days. A time when it was noise that hid under the melodies was purely incomprehensible to me. Listening back to the Stubborn Child screaming back at me through some abyss of memories somewhere deep along a thought trail I can't exactly reach.

Then, there came a day when the cold from the floorboards traveled up to the walls of my room. A day when the radio was left broken and the muffled cries from the other room were all I heard. The day I learned that all the rooms here were just as cold as mine. The day I saw you crying in the kitchen alone.

It was the day the music stopped, and my only desire now is a warm home

Art by Danielle Dykerhouse + Prose by Betsy Van Die



Danielle Dykerhouse, *Forward Facing*, 2024. Acrylic on Canvas and wire

Heading East and Out

by Betsy Van Die

The image of buzzards hovering over the outermost stretch of his father's cornfields was indelibly etched in Leo's brain. He assumed it was a dead rabbit or possum that got them all excited. It's the last thing he remembered of the only home he knew. As he made his way to the train tracks, tears streaming down his face, he carried everything that mattered in an old Army duffel stolen from his old man.

The same old man who kicked him out last night, after discovering Leo in the barn making out with a local townie named Ray. It was 1965 and Leo simply couldn't bring himself to tell his strict Evangelical father that he was a homosexual. No, his bible-thumping old man found out the hard way. This caused such a scene that Leo thought the bastard might die of a heart attack right on the spot, and secretly hoped he would. Leo's mother died when he was 6 and his father doled out beatings for the slightest transgressions.

"I'm better off this way," Leo said to himself as he walked briskly to the rail yard. He was a fan of Woody Guthrie and had been contemplating riding the rails cross country for some time. He gained a little know-how from riding freight trains locally, but always jumped off at the next town. He would thumb a ride back to the dirt road leading to the farm and often endured a whipping for his brief absence.

Leo was strikingly handsome with dark wavy hair, green eyes, and a muscular physique from years of working the land. He possessed an outer swagger that belied years of inner turmoil and abuse.

He recently acquired a dog-eared copy of *City of Night*, reading it cover to cover at least five times. At 19, Leo had never been outside of Iowa and the novel ignited a desire to make the most of his physical prowess, the bright lights of New York City as a backdrop. If he couldn't get a job modeling or acting, no morality issues were standing in the way of turning tricks. He shirked any belief in a greater being many years ago, only going to church to appease his father.

Leo arrived at the rail yard and quickly ascertained which train was heading east. He hopped on a partially open car, the train just started to lurch along. He brought enough food and water to last a few days, as well as a little cash. He removed a blanket from his bag and settled back against the wall.

He was nearly caught twice, but Leo ended up close enough to his intended destination. He jumped off the train in a rundown rail yard situated in a bleak, industrial area somewhere outside Manhattan. As he dodged slowly moving trains and a tangle of intertwined tracks, the entire NYC skyline loomed in the distance, the majestic Empire State Building saluting him in all its glory.

Art by Jonathan Espinoza + Poem by ben aki



Jonathan Espinoza, *Convergence*, 2024. Acrylic paint on canvas.

I was born an island by ben aki

I was born
an island

the product of
the meeting between

a peninsula
and a pond

in the traffic of
coming
and going

settler is he
of backstrokes
and forward marches

in the traffic of
coming
and going

settler is he
who works this land
to make it country

that is how I became
an island

the product of
the meeting between

a passport
and legal status

if it claims America
I say swim
swim my darling!

into the wall
out of the boundless

like those who came last night
and those that come in darkness

Art by Jaymes Fedor + Poem by Maria Requena



Jaymes Fedor, *Connected To My Bones*, 2024. Acrylic on wood.

building/destroying by Maria Requena

Slowly pick up every piece
Look for something shiny
Finding temporary peace
Comforting and frightening

Tape another box shut
This isn't the hard part
Box of journals with every thought
Sticky residue leave a mark

Seasons faded into one another
As footsteps disappeared with melting snow
Exposed in cold rain without cover
Letting go was the deepest blow

New room, same bed
Same street, new home
New walls, old art
Old chairs, new moments

Leave the walls blank
Just one eye, don't forget

Leave space
Take space
Make space

Space

Space

Space

Light the candles half an hour ahead
Twinkly lights, bottles of wine
Everything nice for new guests
Maybe they'll even like me

Paint and markers on found paper
Laughter blending with humming music
Memorize every moment for later
Freeze time but it just tic tic tics

Slowly hold up every piece
Returning to me what I've always missed
Feeling connected to my bones
Feeling loved in my home

Art by Samantha Franco + Poem by Angeles Rangel



Samantha Franco, *cycles:ciclos*, 2024. Scratch paper and acrylic paint.

by Angeles Rangel

I am the gringa
too Americanized to be Latine.
My Spanish lacks the ganas and structure
and I am left stuttering and grasping what's left of my heritage.
I can hear the taunting through the
gaps of their teeth as their tongue pushes rolling R's
and perfect Spanish grammar.
The same Español built off the extermination of my indigenous ancestors:
cultivated and cursed by conquistadores who would be shocked
by the audacity that their descendant is nothing but
gender-fluid queer who says, Latine is a word.

I know my Idiomas;
Pensando en ingles y talking in Spanish
And sometimes I just speak straight pendejadas.
It is a mixture of midwestern mannerisms and Michoacan's crudeness.
I am the gringa who is sangrona, brillante, chingona chicana
Who will cling to her cultura like the bandera of her country
Because no matter how Americanized I am
I know my tongue speaks back home

Art by Ines Gardea + Prose by Angelica Davila



Ines Gardea, *Pilsen / Blue Island*, 2024. Photo print on Canvas.

niñez on Marshall Blvd.

by Angelica Davila

I laugh at Doña Raquel as she slips on ice while walking me home from preschool and later regret it when abue tells me that I'm a "niña caraja!" when I return home. At night I wait by the window for my uncle to pull up in his green mustang; this is the same mustang I must help push when it gets stuck in the snow during the winter. The phone rings and I run to answer it, "Papa?" No, someone else. On weekends we go visit another uncle at the trucking garage that he owns where I help my abue clean up the deteriorating building. Sometimes I play with the guard dogs/ most of them are friendly/ except the one that isn't, and he almost bites me. We go visit my other uncle, the one who lives with Doña Blanca, who unknown to me at the time will one day buy a house that fits us all inside, but I both tune out the adults and only catch glimpses of what will someday be the past. On weekends, abue, mama, my aunt and me all cram into my other uncle's mustang to go beyond the city limits, and then

we all cram in again to return to Marshall Boulevard where home is. The phone rings and I run to answer it, "Papa?" No, someone else. The phone rings again and I run to answer it, "Papa?" No, someone else. It's always someone else and unknown to me yet, memories of papa y Mexico will begin to get disintegrate each year that passes until these memories form a tight knot in a small crevice of my brain. Almost as tight as the apartment on Marshall Boulevard. Not an inch is spared in this apartment. My uncle / the one whose name is on the lease / sleeps in the only bedroom. The dining room is not a dining room but instead is a makeshift bedroom with two full-size beds in it. My mom and I sleep in one of the beds together and my abue and aunt share the other. Another uncle sleeps in the living room on the pull-out sofa, and the cockroaches sleep in the kitchen. The phone rings and stirs the sleeping cockroaches.

Art by Frank Geiser + Poem by Penny Mann



Frank Geiser, *may your soul leap with tender recognition that to be a grain of sand is to be a prophet to a distant land*, 2024. Sea Glass from Lake Michigan, wood, LED strip, acrylic paint, nail, screw, power supply.

america will be a desert in x years

by Penny Mann

I have seen the “wild” lawn grow 100% more flowers than the “manicured” variety

only nature’s abhorrent and desolate seem to appreciate conformity

my ancestors strained to lose their tongue
and become faithfully pale,
yet their gravestones reflect a secret desire for difference—
! flowerless monuments !
and still the moss soothes them a gentle green

our children playing amongst the sands discover a forgotten name

may your soul leap with tender recognition
that to be a grain of sand is to be a prophet
to a distant land

Art by Stephanie Herrera + Poem by Neha Chawla



Stephanie Herrera, *Niño de Chicago*, 2024. Mixed medium: acrylic paint, color pencils, acrylic ink,

BROKEN BOY

by Neha Chawla

The only barriers between us were these glass windows. The walls he put up himself were his to break. I won’t do it anymore. I held him close in my consciousness but I realized he was deeply unhappy. He couldn’t stay in a situation that broke him down every day. I extended my arms to the broken boy. He was talking to me through the window panes. I couldn’t hear him. I tried to read his lips. I whispered back, “I can help you.” His eyes looked desperate. He looked comforted that he could see me. I could save him. I extended my arms out to him. I could be his safety, his solace, his saving grace. I could give him everything he wanted.

Come to me, I’ll be your home just like you are for me.

Art by Evelyn Hernandez + Prose by Valeria Osornio



Evelyn Hernandez, *Sueña Con Los Angelitos*, 2024. Mixed media.

It's Fiesta

by Valeria Osornio

The whole family was waiting in the brightly lit living room. All wearing sus mejores garras, colorful dresses, and patterned suits with the belt buckles and pointy crocodile boots. I sat in my room with nothing to wear. Who plans their outfit for this type of event anyways? I thought to myself.

"Rosita. Mija, estas lista?" Spoke my aunt through the door startling me.

"Sí coming, Tia Sonia, I'm putting on my shoes," I lied. As I stared into my closet, the only nice dress I had in my closet was black. Considering the night, I thought it could be appropriate. Without much of a choice I threw it on, put on my shoes, and joined the others in the living room waiting for it to be time. My abuelo, Mauricio, who was always losing his leg came up to me and said, "Rosita, why so blue tonight? Hoy es Fiesta!"

Abuelo was always excited when Fiesta day came around, and somehow today he was so ready he had even found his leg and wore sus mejores botas and charro style suit. It was his favorite, after all.

"I'm not blue, abuelito. I just had nothing else to wear," I replied.

"Oh bueno. Well, you look beautiful just like your mother." He said with a smile as we stepped out into the darkness of the night. Everyone was so eager to get the party started. There was so much laughter and noise going on from every realm.

We took our candles and made our way down the colorful corridor of doors. Each one with a different last name. We passed several that read: Garcia, Martinez, Lopez, Rodriguez, Hernandez, and then my aunt stopped in front of ours. Our door was blue with our last name "Flores." She looked at abuelo and I, and said, "Here we are. ¿Sabes qué hora es?" We both nodded and hugged just before we opened the door. It was just in case someone got left behind. Abuelo opened the door and walked in first.

"Mi Tequila!" We heard it coming from behind the door and then it was quiet. I giggled as I looked at my tia.

"I guess mi abuela got him his favorite drink, huh?" my aunt laughed and kissed me on the forehead before walking in. As she opened the door and closed it behind her I could hear, "Mi amor, Roberto como estas?" I could tell she was seeing my uncle and asking him how he was. It was funny to me since he can't hear her.

It was my turn. I stood there with my feet feeling heavy in front of the door. I don't know why I was so nervous considering this happened every year. I guess it's the idea of knowing what's on the other side and not being able to live in the place I once called home again. I took a deep breath, turned the knob, with my sweaty cold hands slipping. I stepped

in and shut the door behind me. Not realizing that I had closed my eyes in the process and had been refusing to open them, I stood there until I caught the warm scent of canela and pan dulce. I quickly opened them, and there at the dining room table laid out with candles and flowers, and my favorite goodnight snack. Cinnamon tea and sweet bread, with a note that read,

"We love you Rosita, glad you're back. Te extrañamos! Tu Mamá y Papá."

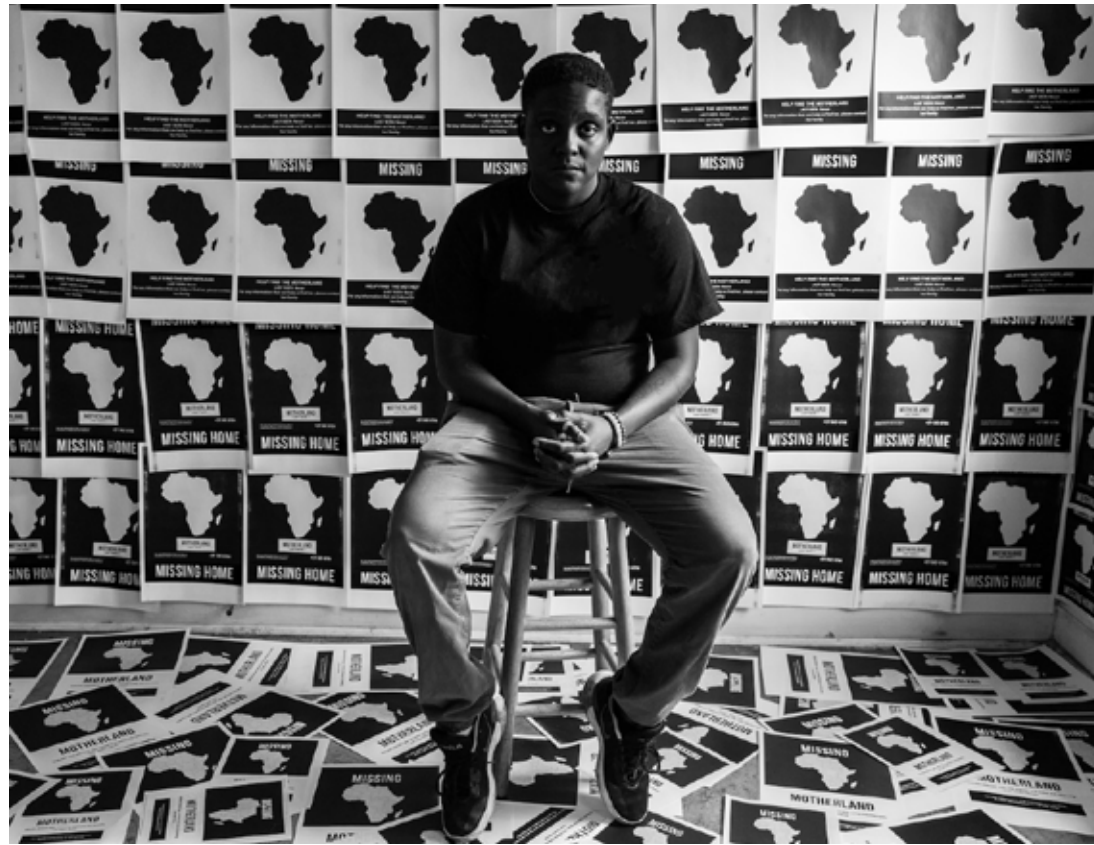
I picked up the mug and took a big sniff from the hot tea, the aroma flooded my mind with all the memories of my mamá putting me to bed as a child, while preparing me a warm té de canela. Just after I drank it she would kiss me goodnight and hug me tight. She would say, "Que sueñes con los angelitos, mi amor." Tuck me in and walk away. Hearing her say those words were always so comforting to hear before bed.

So I took a sip from the tea and put it down. I was no longer nervous and felt joyous and warm to be home. I smelled my flowers and picked up a pretty candle from the bunch. I made my way past the dark living room and walked up the stairs, carefully trying not to make any noise. I turned the corner and saw their room; I stopped and stared at the gray door of their bedroom. Without closing my eyes this time, I turned the knob as I opened the door. I went into the dark room and saw mama and papa in bed sound asleep. I waited at the entrance of the room admiring the scene, remembering the games we'd play in the morning. When I would run in and jump on their bed, waking them up suddenly. I walked over to the edge of the bed by mama and caressed her face softly so as not to startle her in her sleep.

I then remembered to look at the time; since it is known that you could be left behind in this realm. I hated that Fiesta only lasted for a bit. I leaned down, kissed mama on the forehead and whispered in her ear, "que sueñes con los angelitos mama. Sweet dreams. I love you." I walked over to papa and kissed him goodbye as well. I so longingly did not want to leave, but now I really didn't have much time; time works differently here.

I walked back downstairs to the dining room, took some bread and another sip of tea. I picked a blue flower from the bunch and placed it in my hair. I went to the door and turned the knob. As I opened it I heard my abuelo say, "Rosita! ¿Cómo está mi hija preciosa?" The door closed and the Fiesta ended.

Art by Ivana Jarmon + Poem by Theo Sullivan



Ivana Jarmon, *A Piece of Filial Piety*, 2024. Framed Photographs.

Filial Piety by Theo Sullivan

If Africa is supposed to be the /mother land/
I suppose we don't have much of a relationship

Neglect is a form of abuse.

When I think of the /motherland/
I think of how violent birthing is,
There are some who say children cry because
They are angry to be pulled back to the earth
Tethered by the ankles to a world that doesn't want them
This must explain the rage that courses through my body
when I am told by her other children that I do not belong to my mother

The name /mother's land/ clicks in my inner ears as a key in a lock
Just as I've never loved another woman the way I love my mother
I won't ever escape a place with a name as heavy as Africa

To say it once invokes a colonial fantasy of wooden drums and so much sand,
Of heat and dark skin, mashed up with yam and greens—
That gnawingpullingtearing sensation of my ancestors' yearning lives in my bones
In the present, I attempt to keep hold of the hyphens within me
A drunken facsimile of a mother's embrace

If your mother refuses to provide you a home, is that neglect?

Because my mother kicked me out of the house when I turned 18,
I learned to find my Blackness in other things
Forget the vibrancy of paired oranges, reds, and greens

My Black skin is much more akin to
The mud on the mangrove trees, gummed between the jaws of alligators
The dust of coffee beans, grown in the only quiet place on my small island
The night sky, where no one can tell me how black is Black enough
Because we all look the same in the dark

A part of me prays to my broken ancestors for the words anyway
Whispered hymns, waves catching on my lips
Sunk deep down into the black sea.
And the anger never leaves
It has carved a place inside of me, right next to my gallbladder
A continent-sized void that is the closest I'll ever get to a /mother-land/.

Do you ever think about crossing an ocean in order to find out?



Art by Vivian Jones + Prose by Luz Silva



Vivian Jones, *Home is not a place... It's a feeling*, 2024. Digital Painting.

by Luz Silva

November and May used to be insignificant months to me until I moved out of my parents' house two and a half years ago. In November of 2020, I was hired for my first big-girl job. As soon as I could, I got my own medical insurance and began therapy in the early spring of 2021. I was having an existential crisis and would have a meltdown every other day. My parents' problems were affecting me, and had been for years, except now I had little to no patience to endure this because I finally comprehended that they were never mine to deal with.

Instead of being able to distance myself from their problems, they involved me more since I was an adult now: that was my chief complaint to my therapist. She asked me why I didn't leave. Why didn't I create actual distance between us? I told her that was just not how things were done and I wasn't sure it was possible to do on my own. I always wanted to move out and my parents knew I would, eventually. I had to explain to her that the expectation was that it would happen when I got married and left the "proper way".

Months before I met her, I had begun purchasing household items and stashing them in my trunk and closet for when I would move out. I never thought of doing it anytime soon; I only did that to keep this hope alive. I was manifesting it in this way but held lots of doubt that it could happen so soon, not to mention on my own.

For about a week, I gave her question a lot of thought and realized I could afford it and had to do it on my own. So, I began looking for places on Facebook Marketplace. I found a recent posting, inquired, and set up a time for a viewing. That Tuesday morning, I rushed over during my lunch break to see the place and left my application with the gentleman. Things happened really fast afterward. By end of day Tuesday, I had been offered the place. On Thursday, I went over and signed the lease in the morning and that evening I went and bought a new car (I needed a reliable car). The way things lined up that week and worked out, will always be my biggest testament that destiny exists.

All this is to share two points.

I never thought this much time would pass and people would still question why I left. When people ask my parents about me, they're always surprised to hear that I live alone and haven't gotten married. My parents still try to make sense of the decision too. Even though we all lived the same experiences, it seems the time passed and distance has faded their memory. I sometimes catch myself thinking it wasn't that bad, and would have been able to save more money had I stayed, but the thought is short-lived. It was that bad. I haven't doubted my will to live since I left.

I also did not expect so many people to voice their opinions and question why I chose to pay rent over a mortgage. Or how often I'd feel less than for renting instead of investing in a house. Not that I owe this to anyone, but the answer is simple: I needed to get out ASAP, the rent is affordable, and I wasn't ready for the commitment and responsibility that comes with owning property.

This November, I celebrate three years at my job, the beginning of the life I have now. I would make all of these choices over and over again if it led me here. Growing up, I had a house but did not find comfort there. I now have a safe place that's home to me. Choosing myself and living out my desires unapologetically, has made me want more from life.

Art by Lewis Lain + Poem by Thulasi Seshan



Lewis Lain
the place your period lands, 2024.
Acrylic and recycled cardboard
on a window.

by Thulasi Seshan

Are you ever at home if you're never at rest?
Have you ever belonged before?
If home is an endless question, where is the place your period lands?

Where the heart is, where your mom is, where the wine is
Where your voter registration is? Where your voice is heard?

Where you pay at least one utility bill.

We don't say "homeless" anymore.
We don't have homes anymore,
Where they expect to see us.

Do you sleep at home?
Shouldn't you be at home?
You sure as hell shouldn't be here.

Art by Cesar Luna + Poem by Benedicta M Badia



Cesar Luna
Sapient, 2024
Acrylic on canvas.

I die a little every time

by Benedicta M Badia

Locality emotions
Locality grows
Locality expands

You always arrive as "unknown",
Instincts rush to seek faces you can recognize
Recognition comes with time
Still you effort to reach out.

One day you find warm crinkles in someone's eyes
you know you finally have become
your locality has been found

Learnt accents tingle around,
Sighing aromas, flavors follow your daily life,
The people, the people, the people
Their hearts....their hearts...
Don't ask me, don't ask me,
Do not ask me to leave you behind.
Do not forget who I am

I die a little every time.

Locality beloved
My soul is crying as I part

Art by Marie Magnetic +
Prose by Jasmine Rodriguez



Marie Magnetic, *no time to horse around*, 2024. Acrylic on canvas.

Trimming the Work/Horse

by Jasmine Rodriguez

“Apa, can you please sign my permission slip for a field trip? I’m going to the museum.”
His daughter’s note reads.

In the morning, his daughter finds two Abraham Lincoln bills neatly placed on the center of the kitchen table with her signed permission slip.

Underneath her note, her father writes: “Hija, enjoy seeing the dinosaurs.”

Miles away from her home, traffic has started. In his winter rusting car, the expired air freshener swings as the president’s voice booms over the speakers, “Today we face two issues of vital importance for all Americans: growing our economy and protecting our citizens from those who wish to do us harm.”

His work was outside the edge of the city, outside of la migra’s reach. Armed with his lunch and heavily layered with sweaters for his trabajo, he changes in the locker. His silver hair shines underneath the hairnet. His inflamed hands sharpen his knives on the wet stone, cruising its belly over the coarse grit, and finishing the blades over the fine grit. He slips on the cold stainless steel sleeve to protect his arm from the sharpness of his knives. He ties his heavy metal scabbard around his waist with cold chain links. His sheath holding all his trimming knives and his boning hook.

In the raw freezer, his hermanos y hermanas in blue and white form their lines moving together - pulling the dead “mooring” carcass to butcher, the living divides the nine hours of work. A body working on the flesh of another. They cut and cut, laying an assembly of sirloins, briskets, t-bones, porterhouses, rump roast, and cubes of short ribs.

Their frozen jointpain. His frozen jointpain.

Their wet hairnets. His wet hairnet.

Feverish.

Their shirts stick to their chest. Their denim jeans hardens in the cold.

His wet shirt sticks to his chest. His denim jeans harden by the cold.

Tense.

Their bodies heat and sweat the repeating motion.

His body heats and sweats the repeating motion.

Heavy.

Digging, slicing, carving. Cavar, cortar, tallar. Digging, slicing, carving. For hours.

Swinging their metal hooks into the ribs of the vaca. They drag it towards their station. Their hands work with the knives into the flesh. Sharpening the steel for the flesh. His hermanos y hermanas in blue, red, and white leave their lines together - the living mixing together with the dead.

His red ears, runny nose, and swollen fingers defrost on the car ride home. His shirt dries from the heater. His new denim jeans are encrusted with meat trimming stains. Slowly, his body thaws out in two hours. At home, his layers are on the shower floor. Shell-less, he removes the stains from his body and the smell of la sangre y el sudor.

He finds a bone curving into a hook on the cocina table.

“Apa, I got this necklace. It’s a velociraptor claw.”

His daughter’s note reads.

He sleeps on his cama dreaming of their black hooks swinging into each other ribs. They drag themselves on the cold metallic tables. Their bodies feed the line to the President’s Bush address, “As we take the steps necessary to achieve these goals, we will make our future one of peace and prosperity.”

Art by Delisha McKinney +
Poem by Paloma Velasco



Delisha McKinney, *Paletas/icecream*, 2024. 180/gsm paper, sewing thread, wool felt, painted paper.

Artesian St

by Paloma Velasco

I used to wait for the icecream truck every day
I would scour the couch in search of copper circles with passionless men on them
I was a late bloomer, the clock didn't talk to me, so i never knew his name
I would know the icecream man was coming when i heard the ball on the street stop,
while the rhythm of feet rumbled on the cracked road
Arroz con leche, my belly would murmur a mis orejas too big for my moonface, hidden under my black
mop of hair i had refused to let be tamed by mi mamá antier
But today i let her claw my hair into a trenza because there weren't enough copper circles in the couch
el cucuy snatched them last night
Cooperation and silence in exchange for my favorite time of day
Oh, but that was not yesterday
My center of gravity is not a foot from the floor
time is not foreign, solitude is
I think I am still waiting for the icecream man
But he is retired, the truck's tune has turned into a siren song
Unfamiliar, yet visceral
And the paletero was robbed, so now he charges double
I don't buy paletas much anymore
I couldn't keep the paletas from melting
But the sweet stickiness reverberates
Y el recuerdo me llena

un sueño lejano, un recuerdo temprano
Por la noche mis picaduras me despiertan Y lloro, no por el dolor
Pero porque me arrancan de ti
te desesperas
Quieres ver mis tinieblas Encienden lo carnal en tu ser
Te acercas a mis grietas
Siento tus dos dedos extendidas Están frías
Tus palmas cubiertas de callos porque no viniste a amarme
solo para entrometerte
Y te aguanto cuando estás aquí dentro Tus manos ya pegajosas y alimentadas te doy hogar
que yo no tengo
aunque me duela
Aunque confundes mis quejidos con
un solo placer

Art by Diana Noh + Poem by Juj Lepe



Diana Noh, *DUPLEX // FEED*, 2024. Archival pigment print on Hahnemühle canvas, mother of pearl.

DUPLEX // FEED

by Juj Lepe

Keep me safe in your best memories,
Where sliced fruit feigns sincere apology.

Apology is salted fruit, it feigns sincerity.
My tongue does not wound but is wounded,

My wounded tongue tries not to wound again.
Moon looking in, I sleep best in your home.

At home, in sleep, the moon looks best on me.
Always a child senses the conflict & its end—

The child in me senses the end of conflict.
My home is a wound that keeps opening.

My open wound is a home that keeps,
And my mother feeds the fire with her life.

With her fire, my mother feeds my life.
Keep me safe in your best memories.

Art by Andrew Rehs + Words by Corbett Berger



Andrew Rehs, *Second Home*, 2024. Painted Wood, Wood, Bark and Moss,

by Corbett Berger

Everybody with more than one
home has to pick their favorite
one and sell it to somebody else,
who has no home, for \$1.

Art by Clau Rocha + Poem by Maria Jose Ramos Villagra



Clau Rocha, *part of our bodies*,
2024. Collage with watercolor, acrylic,
marker, found paper, wire.

That wall has become part of our bodies. by Maria Jose Ramos Villagra

Mea culpa, mea culpa,
mea máxima culpa.
That's what my grandma used to say
because she knew that the pleasure on her veins
was larger than the pleasure accepted by the Church.
Sometimes I scare myself and the color of my skin
and I need to find excuses to pretend that everything is ok.
Yeah, babe, everything is fine.

It has become harder to identify the border
between my skin and your skin,
between you and me,
between what is private and what we do not accept.
The border between my mouth and something else.

Hoy descubrí
I can choose not to breathe.
I can choose to yell
en lugar de gemir.

Once I read that, we, people from Central America are small.
My grandma taught me that the smallest things are the noisiest.

Juntando mi cuerpo y el mio formamos una identidad concisa, a concise identity.

Art by Amyia Ross + Poem by Brittani' Batts (Tanae B.)



Amiya Ross, *i don't understand and
i won't ask, but eventually, i'll let go*,
2024. Oil on canvas panel.

In the sway by Tanea B

Hey tree, is there something you want to say?
Something we can learn from you by the way your branches sway.
Like how thoughts and feelings can linger unless acknowledged they won't go away.
How ego is always at play.
How it creeps in when there's reason to be afraid.
Having to give in and surrender.
To have trust in the uncertain that everything will be okay.

Hey tree, is there something you want to say?
Unfinished conversations left for a new day.
Drop everything you thought and have to develop a new way.
There's weight for everyone to hold and plate.

Hey tree, is there something you want to say?
Something we can learn from by the way you sway.

Art by Fawaz Sakaw + Prose by Arianna Maggio



Fawaz Sakaw, *Ap3h (Home)*, 2024. Mixed Media.

the lone wolf is not as straightforward as you think (and neither are you)

by Arianna Maggio

the glorification of the lone wolf is sorely misconstrued, if you ask me. of course we think that the idea of the lone wolf is to be admired - we're an individualistic society constantly capitalizing upon the lives of animals we do not bother to understand.

a cursory search on google will tell you that the lone wolf doesn't need permission from others, is stronger on his own, and trusts her own instincts. while parts of these sentiments may be accurate, the overall metaphor is shoddy at best.

little do we care to realize, the lone wolf doesn't just leave their pack because they're caught up in a fraught state of angst - it's often forced, and there are calculated risks involved. if a pack is starving in famine, or the competition for a reproductive partner is significant, young wolves will then depart in pursuit of a mate, not because being with a pack inherently makes them weaker or holds them back. in fact, they become more vulnerable to threats outside of pack conflict. hunting is harder; there is no promise of a mate that is even out there waiting. ultimately, their journey is necessary to maintain their population - the end goal is reunification, reconnecting, rebuilding; not a life of solitude.

and this pursuit is relentless - a study of wolves fitted with gps collars found that the smallest mean distance traveled by solo wolves was 48 miles. the same study found that the farthest distance a lone wolf has been known to travel was 700+ miles between oregon and california, only to result in

being killed by a car. knowing that journey ended in such loss feels gutting; and yet it goes to show that a journey of total solitude can be thankless, no revelations or glory to show for it.

and so i think of how we can fall into these patterns of convincing ourselves and believing that we are better off alone, that the best way to deal with things - pain, grief, betrayal, resentment - is to cut ourselves off from others with no set intention of letting anyone back in. that is not a lone wolf at all - that is an invisible human.

i am not advocating for codependence or enmeshment for anyone - i've been in that place myself; i know the hurt that is wrought upon those who stay and those who work to escape. rather, i am grieving how lonely it is to wrap ourselves in isolation thinking it is the only way we will ever be truly safe. to flee in the face of conflict is one of our most primal, animalistic responses - yet if we do not return to or redefine home, we will always be running away.

Art by Lucero Sanchez + Poem by Clay Cofre



Lucero Sanchez, *Por La Mañana*, 2024. Acrylic on Canvas.

Mens Health presents: How to identify yourself as “Mr. Monopoly”

by Clay Cofre

Breaking news, white boy of the week explains how to know when you’ve, “made it big”!
Qualifications include: visualizing yourself in my neighborhood (before) your boiz from Iowa State took that shit over completely.

Close your eyes and picture yourself at my doorstep. Picture all my hard surfaces covered with hand-crochet table-toppers, picture my rose pink sofa with the plastic covering on it. Picture my ceramic angel collection and all my individually framed family photos, now....

Do you come into my home?
Do you find me sitting there, alone
Nose turned up
At my dinner table
Three of four chairs are empty cuz
You called the cops on my brothers for stealing from
Your
community
Garden.

Does my food make you queasy?
Is it difficult for you to pronounce the dish that I am serving?
are you made uncomfortable by the sheer number of Jesus paintings that are staring at you as I am staring at you as we are yelling at you to step the fuck back.

Do you put your money where your mouth is, but not where it belongs instead? Like towards your weekly soul cycle classes or your local jeweler who sources her turquoise on the low low from indigenous communities and then upcharges it on a multiple of 5?

And what does community mean to you?
Does it mean twelve dollar hemp milk lattes and
A Trader Joe’s less than 500 feet from your pet-friendly condo?
Does it mean white claws at the drum circle and
Does it mean black lives matter in your window but your mouth feels sticky glued shut when Jeremy from next-door is screaming at my abuela to “go back where she came from”

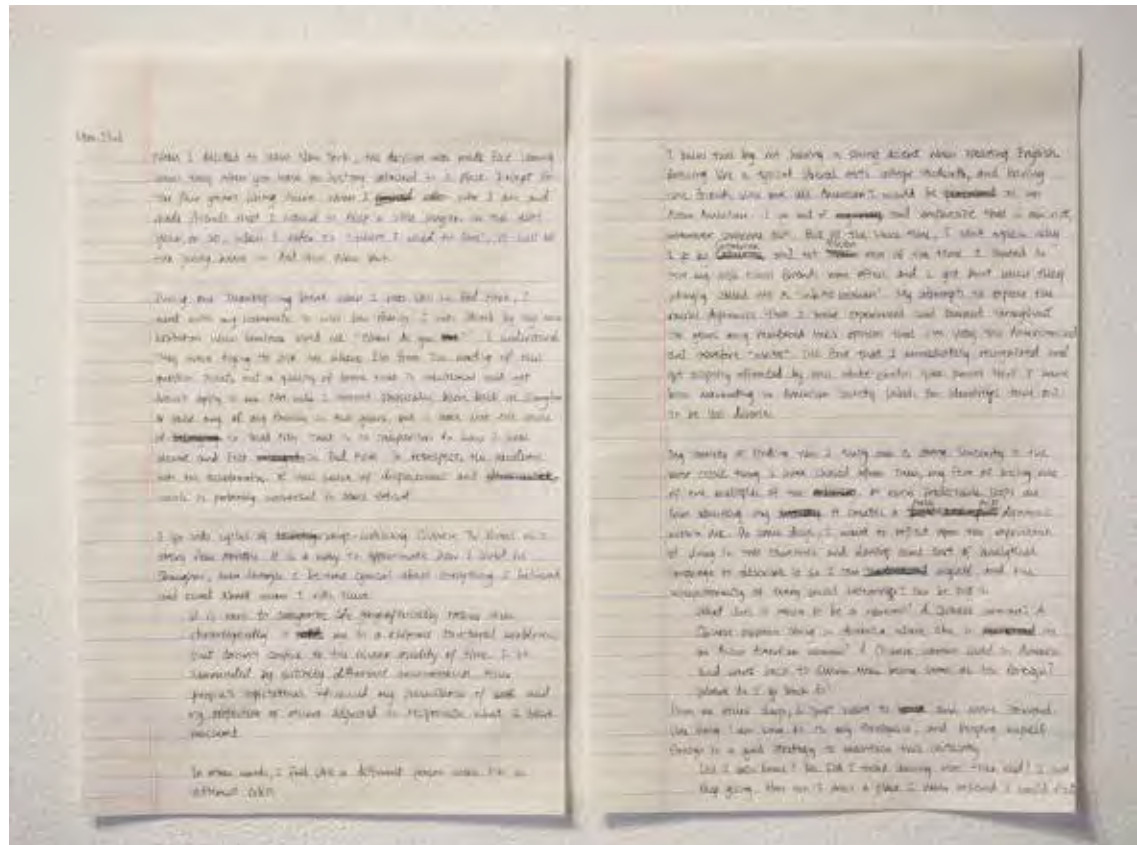
Does it mean my fucking son,
Cant go to fucking school,
At your fucking private university
because you thought affirmative action was unfair,
Meanwhile,
you got in
on your legacy status.

Nah, that’s not what community means to me.
Community to me means Cafe con leche in the morning, queso fresco on the side and translating for my sister at the bank when the teller isn’t speaking OUR language.
Not the other way around.
Community to me means keeping our children safe and collecting wisdom from our elders
It means the same faces in the same places, it means music seeping through your window, as you clean on a Sunday morning,
It means love,
It means love,
It means love.

Art by Ramin Takloo-Bighash + Prose by Yiwen Lyu



Ramin Takloo-Bighash & Yien Lyu, *Mar 23rd*, 2024. Video and Ink & Paper.



by Yiwen Lyu

When I decided to leave New York, the decision was made fast. Leaving seems easy when you have no history attached to a place. Except for the four years living there. When I reformed who I am and made friends that I intend to keep a little longer. In the next year or so, when I refer to “where I used to live”, it will be the janky house in Red Hook New York.

During one Thanksgiving break when I was still in Red Hook, I went with my roommate to visit her family. I was struck by my own hesitation when someone asked me “Where do you live?”. I understand they were trying to ask me where I’m from. The wording of this question points out a quality of home that is intuitional and yet doesn’t apply to me. Not only I haven’t physically been back in Shanghai or seen any of my family in two years, but I have lost the sense of belonging to that city. That is in comparison to how I was secure and felt belonged in Red Hook. In retrospect, the pandemic was the accelerator of this sense of displacement and disconnection, which is probably universal to some extent.

I go into cycles of secretly binge-watching Chinese TV shows once every few months. It is a way to approximate how I lived in Shanghai, even though I became cynical about everything I believed and cared about when I was there.

It is rare to categorize life geographically rather than chronologically. It leads me to a rhizome structured worldview that doesn’t confine to the linear quality of time. To be surrounded by entirely different environments, other people’s expectations influenced my presentation of self, and my projection of others adjusted to reciprocate what I have perceived.

In other words, I feel like a different person when I’m in different cities.

I knew that by not having a strong accent when speaking English, dressing like a typical liberal arts college student, and having close friends who are all American, I would be perceived as an Asian American. I go out of my way and emphasize that I am not, whenever someone asks. But at the same time, I can’t explain why I go by Catherine and not Yiwen most of the time. I started to text my high school friends

more often, and I got hurt when they jokingly called me a “white woman”. My attempts to explain the racial dynamics that I have experienced and learned throughout the years only reinforced their opinion that I’m way too Americanized and therefore “white”. The fact that I immediately recognized and got slightly offended by this white-centric joke proves that I have been marinating in American society. Labels for identities turn out to be less diverse.

My anxiety of finding who I truly am is strong. Sincerity is the most cliché thing I have chased after. Then, my fear of being one of the multiples, of the ordinary, or even predictable stops me from admitting my anxiety. It creates a push-and-pull dynamic within me. On some days, I want to reflect upon the experience of living in two countries and develop some sort of analytical language to describe it so I can understand myself and the intersectionality of every social category I can be put in.

What does it mean to be a woman? A Chinese woman? A Chinese woman living in America where she is perceived as an Asian American woman? A Chinese woman lived in America and went back to China then being seen as too foreign? Where do I go back to?

Then on other days, I just want to leave and move forward. One thing I am sure of is my foreignness, and keeping myself foreign is a good strategy to maintain this certainty.

Did I miss home? Yes. Did I think leaving was the end? I just keep going. How can I miss a place I never believed I would stay?

Art by TEEL ONE + Poem by Melody Contreras



TEEL ONE, *Coco Chips*, 2024. Glycee Print.

to those that see me as a disfavor
by Melody Contreras

your formulated syntax
is a direct replicatio
of the institution that sculpted you
into a fabrication of deceit
gaining you as another investor
rather than valuing your soul
as something more than lucre

when actions repeat same cycles
inflicted onto my brown body
I cannot choose but to laugh and bear
wicked weight that's attempted to depress me

spewed at a smaller dose
I hold it up stronger
because I am stronger
and no person place or thing
can take away the pain I've endured
or the muscles I've maintained
to ensure
I will never be
what has made you
into the same thing as them

//

Solar's awakening

Exhausted flesh terrorized by lucid shadows
calls for a gentle dawn

Stretch your arms and legs
to calm the paralyzed night of slumber

Drink water with glistening slices of lemon
to wash over subconscious toxins

Lather honey-scented lotion to revive and remind you
the sweet brown skin that chose your soul

A new promising deliberate day
offers endless possibilities to inner peace

//

maybe the voids are meant to remind us how:
polarizing we can go
we hold no bounds among ourselves
infinite we are

Art by Pamela Trejo + Poem by Kim Yeoh



Pamela Trejo, *Skylines of our memories*, 2024. Mixed media, collage, and threads.

by Kim Yeoh

You see
a field of flowers
but
I see
all the others
that didn't make it
through winter.

The soil beneath
holding
buried bodies up,
sprung
from
the streets we
built
our homes
on.

Who
were there
before us?

Who
were there
to carry
families
across
the portage park?

Who
were there
to lay hands
on burning ground
I now break
bread on?

Who
were there to
hold
the truth
that was once
a rule
before
I came along
and drew
a line, a circle, a little
space called mine?

Who were there?
Where am I?
How did you
get here, dear
Chicago?

Art by Cindy Uriostegui + Haiku by Scum Drop



Cindy Uriostegui, *NATIVE LAND*, 2024. Embroidery, twine, acrylic, and ink on Muslin and wood panels.

Dance of the Dead by Scum Drop

You are on Native land.
Rest assured that buried bones
will dance on fiercely.

Art by Ami Vasilopoulos + Poem by Stephanie Cruz Rincon



Ami Vasilopoulos, *Your words, they dance now (Portrait of Steph)*, 2024. Oil on canvas.

Puerto Rico by Stephanie Cruz Rincon

Isla bonita
Tierra que nunca fue mía
Como es posible querer algo
que nunca he tenido
sentir que mi ser
se quiebra contra tus orillas
me ahogo en tus aguas
me parto el alma
con todo lo que me han negado
Me han quitado la vida
Me han robado la cultura
Me han dejado sin oportunidad
de tener pueblo
de tener una vida entre tus brazos
Te amo y te añoro
pero también te odio
Los trozos que me dieron de ti
Me cortaron más que tu ausencia
más de mi exilio
Fue tu rechazo
Fue la homofobia y el machismo
Fue la vergüenza por nacer
y el temor de vivir
La palabra comunidad
fue un chiste que nunca entendí
Como admitir
That all I have ever wanted
was to be accepted by you
was to find the home within your shores
that came before
all the rage and violence
Where the words from my tongue tasted
only of you
I don't know how to fill this ache
or how to heal the wounds you left on me
How can I be proud of my heritage
when all I can see when I think of you
is my father
is his voice laughing in pure joy
then telling me I am horrible
his eyes haunt me at night
and his screams still echo in my soul
How can I listen to your music among all
that noise?
All those shouts and curses and broken
promises
Puerto Rico,
I have roots running deep within you
but they never fully formed
I was ripped from your earth
because that was the only way I could stay
alive
I will never regret that
You gave birth to me
I will never forget that
But maybe
you wanted me to go
Maybe you saved my life the only way you
knew
Maybe it was you
who spoke to my mother
who opened her eyes to the danger
You are water just as much as you are earth
and I have never forgotten your tides

They flow deep within me
whenever I let go
whenever I release
Yo no sé donde ir desde aquí
Pero está bien porque confió
en ti y en mí
Porque al fin creo
que con cada paso que tomo
Tú estas allí entre mis dedos
moviendo mi pelo
Yo no tengo pueblo
porque nuestra gente esta en todos los rincones de la tierra
porque mi familia es más grande de la sangre que comparto con otros
porque la cultura es fluida como tus mares

Immigrant-like
like being uprooted and torn
from the only home you have ever known
Your heart is neither here nor there
But everywhere and nowhere
The faces of the ones
you love most
start to blur
your favorite places
and sounds
echo
against the holes
that form in the innermost
recesses of your soul
Something breaks, inside
Immigrant-like
like you have the capacity to learn
how to be both
how to blend so well
you disappear
that is all you want
once you step foot on a foreigner's land
Here you are one thing
There you are another
But nowhere are you ever
allowed to just be
Immigrant-like
a stranger's words
between your teeth
rolling around clumsily
falling out with all the wrong sounds
there is no music in that language
it does not make your heart sing
it does not taste like home
not the way your mother tongue used to
No, all it does is taint your voice
so that every word you speak
no matter which language
tastes of bitterness and loss
Maybe that's why
you were so quiet
for so long
Even after you learned
how to pronounce
each one in a way that satisfied
the adults in your life

It still felt wrong
You still felt hollow
Immigrant-like
like you will never have to worry
that your mother will be taken from you
suddenly
because she is illegal
You are privileged there
but legality and a US passport
does not make you belong
and you are reminded of that
every time someone stares a little too long
when you speak and want to swallow your words
shame festering in your heart
both for being different
yet simultaneously trying to conform
Immigrant-like
like everything you do
has an undercurrent of grief
of flapping in the wind aimlessly
like it doesn't matter where you go
like you can get up and leave at any point
because you refuse to lay down roots
after they were taken from you
You're afraid to at this point
To dare to call somewhere home
Because you learned early the idea of solid ground
is a lie, is a trap, is the one thing you can never have
How are you supposed to transform someone who has chaos
flowing through their bones into a homebody?
Immigrant-like
like you have been tired
since the day you were born
half your life consists of distant memories
and distorted voices
tucked away in the folds of your brain
there is a longing you cannot fucking shake
Immigrant-like
like you are torn between two worlds
You are not
You are the bridge
Your entire life has been about creating your own
Your own world, your own experiences, your own home
Learning to love yourself has come
with the realization
that your existence is an integration of everything you are
Learning to celebrate yourself
has infused a music in your voice
Your words they dance now
move round and round your tongue like they belong
they do
they are yours
You were never broken
You were bruised
Immigrant-like
is one phrase, two words
to outline your experience
but only music, only dance
can truly describe your life
Chaos exists within you but so does peace
You no longer have to choose
between one part of you and another
You are whole and you are allowed to exist as so

Art by Ivy Waegel + Prose by Aryn Hills



Ivy Waegel, *Ivy's dream group relationship, as a house*, 2024. Oil paints on handmade scrap canvas and frame.

Love Insurance

by Aryn Hills

I remember; it was a Wednesday morning, sometime ago. I was walking around an old neighborhood, having just snuck out of a lover's place so we wouldn't be found out, at the ass crack of dawn. It's autumn right now, the same then, so it was the perfect mix of warm and cool then, as well. All of the leaves were swimming upstream through shades of green and yellow, having yet to greet the oranges and reds that awaited on the way down. So early, I imagined the birdies were singing; "oh sweet boy, you must find joy/ in the little things/finish your dream in a sweeter sleep" a fitting plea, a cuter way of telling me it's too damn early to be wandering. But love prevailed that day. It had me in a park, waiting for the sun to fly a little higher. Also, I couldn't just go "home" which was just down the road, blocks away. I had no key and, apparently, it would've been rude to wake up someone in that home so early in the morning. I just sat there on a table in the middle of a field, inside a public gazebo, alone. Thoughts of friends, relations and what to do next came in and out and they were laced with hunger. With eyes watery but less like tears & more like dew on the morning grass, I stared down a road from where I sat, unaware that I'm falling to the side and drifting back to sleep, as the birds previously advised. I caught myself on the way down but my feelings continued to fall. The immediate impact; realizing I was sleepy, hungry, cold, & out of options.

a few years later...

Now, this feeling that I have saying this, was not with me then. I was so used to dealing with adversities alone, I learned to mute my emotions, similarly, to how we throw our phones into dnd mode. Today, I feel hurt, remembering where I've been. Recently, I've found myself carrying around the lost pride of that boy into moments where I've defended my sacred spaces. The aggression had shown itself because I wasn't yet used to having things that are mine, genuinely mine and I'm still not. A desire to defend such things, tosses my heart in kerosene, an outdated practice/feeling in which I've kept alive purely out of nostalgia.

There was a time where I believed a person could be mine. Recklessly believing friends and lovers belonged to me in this altruistic sort of way. Even I, to them. When you connect with significant people and they make a beautiful impression on you, a

new world is created and all of the emotions you share are the trees, clouds, flowers, rain, blades of grass, the wind, sunshine, etc. & with every memory... there's a season. Conversation is the architect, the foreman on duty, the designer in residence. Ironically, with every wall that tumbles, one goes up... you feel me? Over and over until you have a home. Inside of these homes are everything you admire, love, respect, & know about each other. The way someone hugs you can be that fur blanket in the living room. The dependability you sense in someone can be the couch that it's on. A lover's laugh is the vinyl collection and their voice overall, the record player. I can go on and on until my dream home is on this page but it's never all dreamy, is it? So, instead, I have questions for you: where & how are you in these "worlds" when you think of certain people?... Are you comfortable? Are you alone? Are you cozy or are you cold? Do you feel empty or do you feel whole? Is everything covered in shades of gray or are you sure about it all? Is it a house or is it a home? If someone moves out, will you find a new roommate? Or will you demolish or sell the place? Taking only a few of your favorites, will you leave behind everything? We've all had things in our heart that have made arson look a little too good, like the perfect option but that's another story. It's okay if you don't have the answers right now. I'm not even sure if I could answer them myself. At least not at the moment. We should know the answers at some point though.

This may be just another instance of me taking friendship/romance/love (overall) very seriously but I don't care. I'd go as far as saying; on all levels of connection, if there's love I feel, what's mine is yours. I tried to use that way of thinking to balance out my possessive ways. It kind of worked until entire worlds came crashing down and so many things were lost in the fires. Insurance doesn't cover this sort of thing. At best, all we can do is talk about it. So... Here I am.

Beautiful. Alright, that's all the time we have for today. We touched base on a lot of things. You said a lot. How do you feel?... Same time next week?

Sure. How much do I owe you?

Art by Emily Schroeder Willis + Poem by Angelica Flores



Emily Schroeder Willis, *Piso, Paso, Pena (Floor, Step, Grief)*, 2024. Gouache cut paper.

My Second Home

by Angelica Flores

On October 25, 2023, Hurricane Otis, a category 5 hurricane, hit the city of Acapulco. Hurricane Otis is the most catastrophic hurricane that Acapulco has experienced since Hurricane Pauline in 1997.

—

My second home is Acapulco,
the city where my mother grew up.
My second home is someone else's first
and only home.

It is the home of people who lost everything
except their faith in God.

It is the home of people who serve tourists,
the ones the news focused on
during the first days after the hurricane,
neglecting the colonias.

It's the home of stray dogs and cats who used
to roam the beaches. We will never
know the exact death toll of these creatures.

My second home is where an honorable captain
from Puebla and his fellow crew members went down with the docked recreation yacht they worked for.

It's where they said only 27 deaths then 37, and then 48
when there is likely more than one hundred deaths
at the very least.

It's where family members are still
searching for their loved ones
who worked as fishermen,
fearing the worst.

It is not the home of authority figures who visit
only to get mud on their boots and call it a day.
So much disrespect for people who were fatally carried
away by mudslides hours before.

But after all, my second home has a coat of arms
with two hands clearing away reeds
the hands of its citizens who have no choice
but to start anew.

Art by Raine Yung + Poem by Micaela Petkus



Raine Yung, *Toward*, 2024. Digital print.

by Micaela Petkus

If home is where the heart is
First, you have to have one
If home is full of darkness
Home is where you run from

1000 Words | Home Not Home Exhibition & Project
Pilsen Arts & Community House
1637 W 18th Street

Schedule of Events
May 3rd — June 2nd 2024

Exhibition Opening

Friday May 3rd 6pm–10pm

Art Market

Saturday May 11th 1pm–6pm

PACH's Open Mic

Thursday May 16th at 7pm

Tattoo Night

Thursday May 23rd 4pm–9pm

Music/Performance Night

Sunday May 26th 7pm–9pm

Author Night & Closing Event

Sunday June 2nd 7pm–9pm

Gallery Hours

Wednesdays — Sundays
May 3rd–June 2nd 12pm–6pm



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