



# SPARK\*

A REVIEW OF NSCC STUDENT LITERARY & ARTISTIC EXPRESSION



SPARK 2019 **volume 11**

# **sparked** by inspiration

Through poetry and stories, photographs and drawings, Spark showcases the talent and spirit of students at North Shore Community College.

This eleventh issue of Spark is dedicated to the persistence of vision, forward movement, and the knowledge that creativity is its own reward. **Enjoy.**

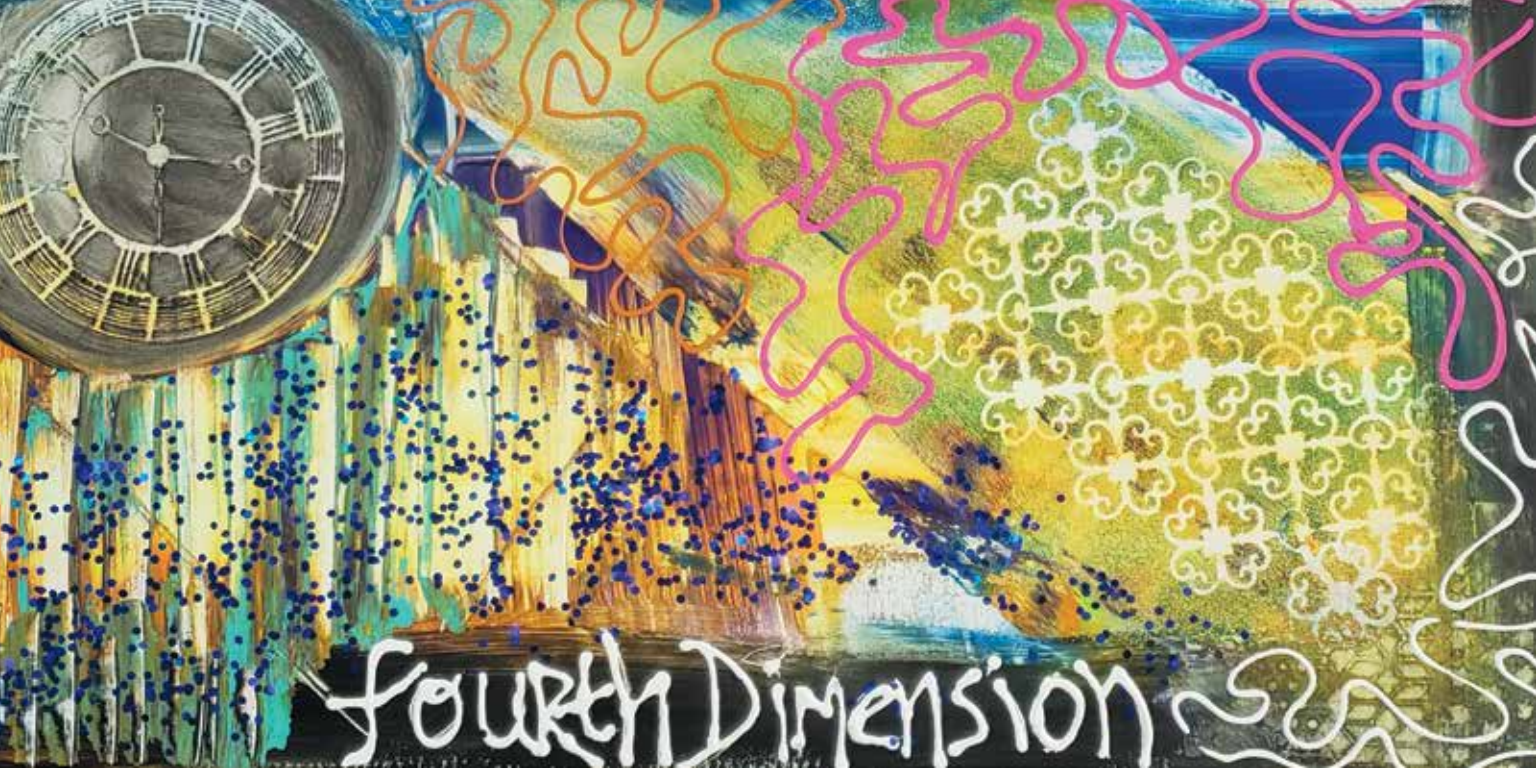
## spark on the inside

4. Mixed media on canvas | *ANDREA BADOLATO*
4. 12:17am | *SOPHIA KERRINS*
4. Innovation by Design | *CHRIS TOPPIN*
5. Rise Up | *MICHELLE BERNIER*
5. Natural Selection | *GABI SEAMAN*
5. It's All about You Poster | *RYAN TAVARES*
6. A Police | *JULIA MCCARTHY*
7. Tree Fungi | *ERIK STEFANOWSKI*
7. Nokia 8110 Illustration | *PHONG HUYNH*
7. Damselfly | *REBECCA GOSIEWSKI*
8. Cloudy Glass | *MATTHEW MACDONALD*
8. College Photography | *ERIK STEFANOWSKI*
9. Dirty Rubies Are Signs Of Yin Yang | *DIANA DIAZ*
9. Lexy | *OLIVIA DANTZLER*
10. Quack | *ERIK STEFANOWSKI*
10. Hawk on a Fence | *ERIK STEFANOWSKI*
11. Beauty of Nature | *PRITAM BARUA*
11. The Tale of a Snail | *RYAN DUGGAN*
11. Stars | *SOPHIA KERRINS*
12. Maritime | *OLIVIA DANTZLER*
13. Empty Spaces | *CHARLIE HEATH*
14. A Painful Silence | *KAITLYN EATON*
14. Copper, Coral, Red | *TIMOTHY FERRERA*
14. Boots | *JON STRONACH*
15. Moon Elephant | *ADDISON KIELPINSKI*
15. Pokeball Zentangle | *STACEY CLAVIJO*
15. Promises | *SOPHIA KERRINS*
16. Graphite Drawing | *JON STRONACH*
16. The Fighter | *KAITLYN EATON*
16. 2019 Total Lunar Eclipse | *JONATHAN PELLERIN*
17. To Drench Yourself In Earth : A Guide | *GABI SEAMAN*
17. The End | *REBECCA GOSIEWSKI*
18. Flower Man | *PRITAM BARUA*
18. Happy | *MARC NICKERSON*
19. Charcoal Drawing | *JON STRONACH*
20. Self-portrait | *OLIVIA DANTZLER*
20. Of Sense and Song | *JULIA MCCARTHY*
20. Upside Down World | *PHONG HUYNH*
21. Afternoon Observation | *GABI SEAMAN*
21. Beautiful Sunset on Charles River | *PHONG HUYNH*
22. Running Backwards | *RYAN DUGGAN*
23. Dawn of a New Age | *NICOLAS GONZALEZ*
24. Clocktower | *TIMOTHY FERRERA*
24. Family Dinners | *RYAN DUGGAN*
25. Violet | *OLIVIA DANTZLER*
26. Friendship Forever | *PRITAM BARUA*
27. Innocent and Curious | *PRITAM BARUA*
27. Freckles | *GABI SEAMAN*
27. Photography | *HAILEY SANPHY*
28. Cold | *DEANNA MCCALLUM*
29. Lost Flower | *MATTHEW MACDONALD*
30. Mixed media on canvas | *ANDREA BADOLATO*
30. Silhouette | *HAILEY SANPHY*
30. Bebe Piece | *CHRIS TOPPIN*
31. Aging Gracefully | *RYAN DUGGAN*
31. Point of View | *MATTHEW MACDONALD*
31. North End Architecture | *ADDISON KIELPINSKI*
32. Losing Our Mind | *SOPHIA DELEON*
33. Simple Joy | *CHRIS TOPPIN*
33. 1967 Shelby | *REBECCA GOSIEWSKI*
34. Cross-country | *OLIVIA DANTZLER*
35. Boston Harbor at Night | *PHONG HUYNH*

on the cover:

A Herd of Mustangs | *REBECCA GOSIEWSKI*





clockwise (from top left):  
 Mixed media on canvas | *ANDREA BADOLATO*  
 Rise Up | *MICHELLE BERNIER*  
 It's All about You Poster | *RYAN TAVARES*  
 Innovation by Design | *CHRIS TOPPIN*

12:17am

by **Sophia Kerrins**

the clock reads 12:17am  
 and you sleep so gently  
 next to me  
 that i am afraid  
 if i breathe too hard  
 you'll float away  
 but here  
 peace is a verb  
 it is every rise  
 and fall  
 of your chest  
 and every brush  
 of your skin  
 beneath my fingers  
 this is the meeting place  
 for love  
 this fragile humming pasture  
 of passing time





## Natural Selection

by Gabi Seaman

Feeling my way through lucid dreams, understanding  
that mistakes are necessary for growth

In evolution, species have to experience having the  
under hand so they can further evolve for survival.

I, am Irish Moss  
a soft bed for elk to lay,  
providing a place to rejuvenate and rest,

at least that's what I'd like to be

Friends and Enemies are mushrooms

just the same as medicinal trial and error, one fungus  
I thought was beneficial shows later that it was  
presenting a discreet poison slowly infecting  
parts of my mind.

I need a teacher but I don't need a role model

■

Y O U  
MISS  
100 PERCENT  
of the  
SHOTS  
YOU  
NEVER  
TAKE

*Unknown*

# A Police

by Julia McCarthy

Growing up, my parents decided I needed a speech therapist.

I don't know why they insisted. *I* understood exactly what I was saying. Others, though, would look down at adorable little me, confused. Perhaps I mumbled too much, or mispronounced the words. Maybe I was a four-year old with a wicked thick B-*ah*-ston accent.

I don't know. *I* understood me. Why didn't they?

We are at church, and the preaching man in white flowing robes and sizable spectacles calls out to the children, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"A police!" I reply, eagerly.

Hearing a small voice, he scans the audience. "A what?"

The attention of a large and silent room makes me shrink into the wooden bench, the volume from my mouth shriveling as I struggle to repeat myself. "A police."

There is a pause, and he steps away from the pulpit, tilting an ear in my direction. "Say it again?"

The room feels far too large, and I feel far too small, swallowed by the audience of bodies larger and taller than my own. I squirm, my feet not even reaching the floor. Large faces turn to look down on me. So many faces. "A police," I mumble, and I feel their curious gazes grow puzzled. The silence prolongs, my little hands begin to sweat, and I shift, making the bench squeak.

He pads along down the carpeted aisle, closer. "A what?" His voice and face are kind, but I didn't notice. He is one of many, many faces, and all of them are tilting down, bewildered, in this loudly silent and ginormous room with the tallest of ceilings that reach for the heavens.

I swallow, hands twisting in the fabric at the edge of my shirt. I try speaking a little louder, a little clearer, annunciating with my four-year-old voice. "A pol-*eeese!*" The expressions around me don't change, and my mind frets. *Should I say police officer? No, no, that's too big a word. A police-man? But I'm a girl! Surely he understands I'm saying police? What else could I possibly be saying?*

His eyes are perplexed, but he's a nice man, and doesn't want a child in God's house to feel ignored. I just want the attention to end. Standing between the pews, as proximity didn't make my words any clearer, he turns to my dad for translation. "What did she say?"

I look over my shoulder, and my dad smiles proudly, his voice booming deeper than mine ever possibly could, "She wants to be a priest."

*What?! NO! Dad, that's not—*

It was too late. Father Bill's glee is magnified by his glasses as he addresses the whole of the congregation with wide arms. "She wants to be a *priest!*"

And he clapped. They all clapped. Every face staring at me clapped, and my parents are so proud, the priest so happy, my sister's eyes roll at the youngest being a suck up, God is watching me in this very moment, judging, and I experience the true horror that I was going to hell because I really didn't want to become a priest.

■





*clockwise (from top right):*

Tree Fungi | *ERIK STEFANOWSKI*

Nokia 8110 Illustration | *PHONG HUYNH*

Damselfly | *REBECCA GOSIEWSKI*





Cloudy Glass | *MATTHEW MACDONALD*

College Photography | *ERIK STEFANOWSKI*





# Dirty Rubies Are Signs Of Yin Yang

by Diana Diaz

I still remember the cold moon  
The day I came to the USA in  
November.  
Outside, the trees were brown and  
broken,  
but the fallen leaves on the ground  
Were still elegantly red.  
It was the first time, I saw an ocean  
Of rubies outside my window.  
The row of houses were like  
Illuminated screens.

Inside, my home was filled with  
Sounds of sizzling pots and pans,  
My brothers' video games,  
and everyday chatter, but my spirit was  
Completely silent.  
In this sublime moment, it was just  
Me and the radiating scarlet leaves.

It was almost December -- all my  
Rubies outside turned to dirt,  
And the everyday noises inside  
Finally exploded.  
My home was a chaos with all the  
Commotion that my family made.  
Just imagined several people  
Surviving in two room and one  
Bathroom.  
Everybody woke up at the same  
time and slept the same time.

Entering high school was like hell --  
Everyday I felt the most  
Insificant girl in the world.  
Without know any English, I  
couldn't communicate -- I was  
Stuck in a different universe.  
I could see. I could hear. Yet, I  
Couldn't understand. And no one  
could understand me.  
How I can survive like that?



Lexy | OLIVIA DANTZLER

I was trapped inside my own  
Reality -- I was afraid I could fall  
With no one to guide my heart.

With time, everything changed—  
outside , it was once again an ocean  
of rubies.  
New schools. New students. New life....

My ocean of rubies flourished  
Again  
Because there was always someone behind me  
And that someone was God who never let me down.

■







*clockwise (from top left):*

Quack | *ERIK STEFANOWSKI*

Beauty of Nature | *PRITAM BARUA*

Hawk on a Fence | *ERIK STEFANOWSKI*

## The Tale of a Snail

**by Ryan Duggan**

There once was a snail from the city,  
she fancied herself very pretty.  
she flew to out to France, and by happenchance,  
became escargot,  
what a pity.

■

## Stars

**by Sophia Kerrins**

and perhaps  
all the stars tie their noose  
to the moon  
that is how they hang themselves  
in the sky  
and the moon  
she wanes  
with the weight  
of all that loss

■





# Empty Spaces

by Charlie Heath

Sometimes we have to admit that everything that seemed right is not.

The good is so good, but the bad feels worse. We crave the highs when our hearts swell with love and we dread the low when reminded of how one-sided that love is. But there is hope. There is always hope, even if false. Shreds of it weave together to create threadbare blankets we throw over ourselves. We try and keep ourselves warm, we cling to them, wanting so badly to believe. Perhaps hope is all we have.

Is it giving up or just knowing when to walk away? Either way, what was there is ending. Things are never simple. You have to work at love, and we do. Do they? There is lost emotion, no longer growing and blossoming as it once did. The flower we had cultivated is no longer watered by the other set of hands that planted it. You don't hate each other but have just lost what used to be. We focus on those shreds of hope that we can bounce back, glimmering in the mirrors we look into to see the tears that stain our cheeks.

Spending our nights turned away on our sides, miles of sheet stretching between us. That empty space is cold and rigid. The longest nights go by silently as if silence will cover up what has been lost. Mornings are awkward and chilly. Breakfast for one sitting at a table shared with two. Words are too hard to say even when we want so badly to speak. Days are dull as the space grows thick and stuffy. The music that plays on those rainy afternoons no longer causes us to dance recklessly through the living room, reminding us that maybe we don't know how to dance anymore.

We become desperate to feel the spark that has vanished. Snuffed out by crushing routine. Hands held on movie nights retreat to their laps as the story drones on painfully. Sitting on the couch, the space across the cushions grows. Night after night it becomes wider until we're almost pressed against the armrests. We put in less effort when we see that changes aren't coming. Yet we still say we're trying. We shout that we're working on all we hold as if being louder makes it true. We see how their eyes don't shine when they look into ours. They are tired eyes now. There are words we haven't heard in months, words we've become too scared to pronounce.

We live on wants and wishes and shells of pretty promises that never come to fruition, never live up to what we dream. The act of acknowledging the fact almost hurts more than the feeling. Just words, but they hold such immense power. We hold our beautiful ideas tight enough to make our knuckles turn white. We never want to let go. Letting go would feel like giving up, and how could we give up when we still have hope? We constantly wait for that upswing. That intoxicating rush that comes from our full love and the attention they give us in exchange. A toxic cycle that we have refused to leave.

Eventually, we begin to see through that false hope we held tightly over our eyes. The space that stretches across mattresses and couches has spilled into our love. Our blankets of hope cannot warm us any longer. We long to dance again but we're tied to our chair at the breakfast table, the adventure has long gone. Each small, cold instance grows to consume what once seemed right until there is nothing left.

We are pulled apart completely by our own love until there is nothing left between us.

■

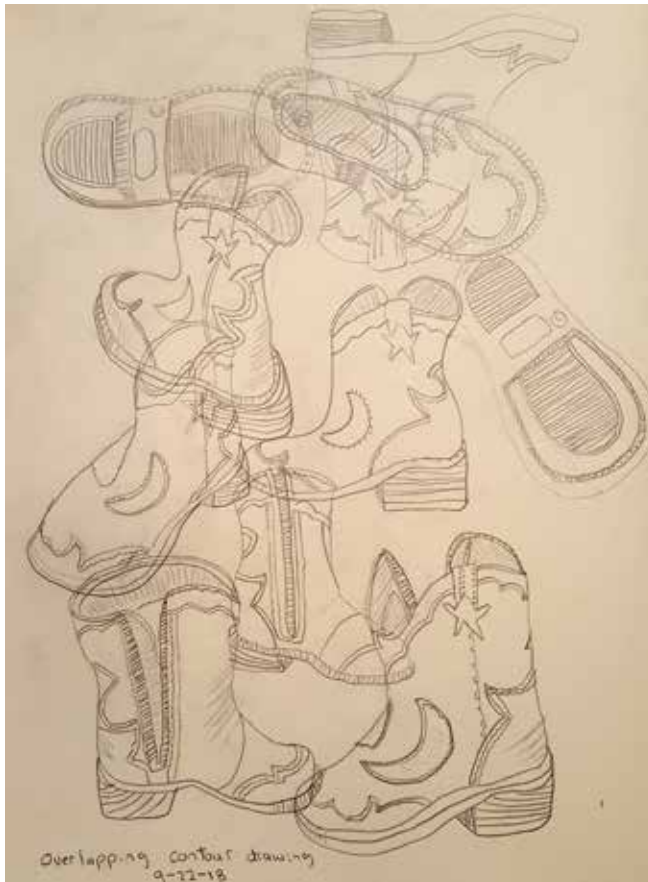
*left:*

Maritime | OLIVIA DANTZLER

# A Painful Silence

by Kaitlyn Eaton

As I sit here in my mind of despair  
I can't imagine my life without my mother in it  
While my thoughts starts to race  
My heart starts pounding  
I get the cold sweats dripping down my face  
I realized my mom is not coming back  
I start to panic  
I ask myself why  
Is this hell I'm living in?  
Or is there a way out of this pain  
I call out your name  
But no answer  
Just a painful silence  
I scream out  
Mom come back to me please come back  
But nothing  
Nothing but silence



clockwise (from top left):  
Copper, Coral, Red | TIMOTHY FERRERA  
Moon Elephant | ADDISON KIELPINSKI  
Pokeball Zentangle | STACEY CLAVIJO  
Boots | JON STRONACH





## Promises

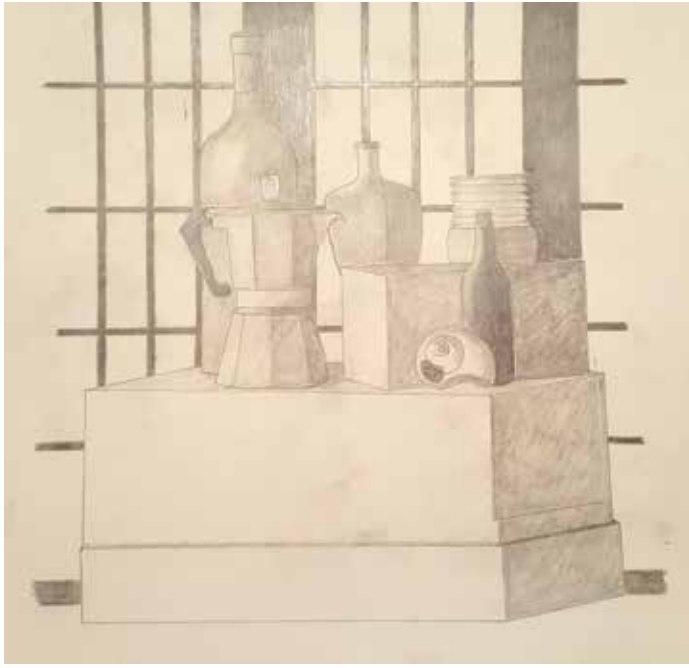
by **Sophia Kerrins**

i promise to be kinder  
i'll tell you that you're worth  
the earth  
and the stars  
and that i love you

i promise to remind you  
everyday  
and every night

- you always forget  
to remind people  
when you think you'll have them  
forever





Graphite Drawing | *JON STRONACH*

## The Fighter

by **Kaitlyn Eaton**

you can beat me down  
but I will not stay on the ground  
you I can throw me in a river  
but I will not drown  
you can break and smash me  
but will not crumble  
you can try burn my building down  
but i'll reborn from the ashes  
you can break my bones with stick and stones  
but you will not break my heart  
you can tell me i'm ugly all you want  
but I know whats inside and you don't  
when I fall  
I will get back up  
because I'm warrior a Fighter and Survivor



2019 Total Lunar Eclipse | *JONATHAN PELLERIN*



*Jonathan Pellerin 1-20-19*

# To Drench Yourself In Earth : A Guide

by **Gabi Seaman**

To collect all the moments I felt clean and warm and  
save them

for when The Sun can't see me  
or when You cross my mind.

Little Moth night butterfly sitting on my ceiling  
sea foam murky blue  
little sea storm  
grave grace and friction.

A critical example of my current state  
meeting me In quiet places

Conducting eyelids to embrace  
lashes reunite and move  
ever so slightly  
acknowledging presence  
removing a troubled mind for a moment to see colors  
and shapes  
created in the dark

..

The Dark is malleable  
Words are malleable  
A State of Mind is malleable  
Allow Yourself to be malleable  
Let words move your soul, surrender to the little  
hairs on the back of your neck  
Surrender to the shiver down your spin  
Write Down what makes you shiver  
Document what moves you  
use Sadness as an excuse to move your vessel in  
strange ways and dissolve into words you frantically  
spill onto a page pressed with herbs and roots

■

# The End

by **Rebecca Gosiewski**

He scuffed a crack in the dry ground with His toe,  
then pushed back His hood.

There was no one to see Him now. His breath  
clouded the air before Him as He sighed. It was over.  
He pulled out His pocket watch, the last dying rays  
of sun catching the tarnished metal.

Around Him, the world darkened as the day ended,  
cast into eternal shadow.

Everything was silent after years of war, famine,  
and plagues. Earth lay uninhabitable, a wasteland  
of rubble and dust. The moon winked faintly in the  
smoke-worn sky, a tiny speck among the distant stars.

The last human souls had been ushered through  
Death's doors. There would be

time to sort them later—who would rise to eternal  
paradise, and who would fall to endless torture.  
Plenty of time. All the time in the universe. Eternity.

Death put away His pocket watch. It had finally  
stopped ticking. Behind

Him, the doors slowly began to creak shut after  
countless millennia. Then they halted. Death  
squinted up at the doors, puzzled. The last soul had  
been collected. Hadn't it? He turned back to the  
barren land.

She stood alone. A frayed gray gown that had once  
glowed white draped Her

frail form. Wilted flowers crowned Her hair.

Slowly, She approached, a sad smile lifting Her ashen  
lips. The ghost of whom

She had once been lingered in Her dull eyes, a  
fragment of the timeless being who had guarded  
souls as they walked the Earth. The same souls He  
now harbored in His realm.

Death swallowed. "Come in, Life."

■





Flower Man | PRITAM BARUA

## Happy

by Marc Nickerson

I stepped over a sun bleached grocery bag, ragged and filled with an assortment of empty food packages. I followed Hap, ducked a low hanging branch, then climbed down a steep drop off. In the distance were razor wire topped fences surrounding massive natural gas tanks, apparent factories, and other signs of light industry. We walked over broken bits of shale and the abandoned homes of shellfish. He brought us to a small cove of dilapidated trees, the grass matted down and trodden. Ten feet in one direction was a chain link fence, an overfilled dumpster, and the back door of a local chain restaurant. Fifty feet in the other direction were the remnants of Lynn Harbor, a shell of its former glory, and mostly disused.

“Some couple said that they stay out on the marsh. They said it was good, so we just went,” Hap paused,

and look at a pile of empty plastic bottles. “Basically they seemed to chase us deeper and deeper into the treeline. You want to be where you can get to supplies, but you don’t want to be found.”

His name ‘Hap’ was short for ‘Happy,’ and it fit his demeanor. He showed me the area where he spent countless nights outdoors, proudly displaying its strategic location with a smile on his face. He was proud of his ingenuity, and his resourcefulness. “They spend like \$300 on these big red aluminum ‘No Trespassing’ signs, and you can just take them and go scrap them for the money at the junkyard.”

Hap appeared to be a big man, but up close, I realized it is just the bulk of several layers of clothing. He had a mismatched wardrobe, camouflage utility pants paired with a tattered knee length pea coat. Brand new, unsoiled boots on his feet contrasted to the rest of his outfit. The cigarette he was sucking down got dangerously close to his singed wool gloves, which were cut off at the knuckles. His

long disheveled hair was corrupted with grays. The genuine smile revealed smokers teeth, and the hygiene typical of a homeless person.

The trees offered no break from the breeze coming off of the water. A mild day in early autumn was uncomfortable. The thought of a freezing rain storm or snow seemed unbearable.

“The last winter I had was deadly. You have to stay up top and not sink in. When you have exhaustion, you start losing your vision, that’s how you know you’re dying,” he grabbed hold of a tree to emphasize. “Basically you’re just going from tree to tree and just walking up on the ice, so you don’t fall down in it.”

Hap lived here through seven New England winters, including the blizzards of 2013 and 2015 which each dumped two feet of snow. By then, he had perfected his method of building shelters of fallen trees and tarps, modeled after Native American teepees.

“You just build ten times what you need. Then the weather takes nine tenths of that.” He tells me how he would try to get indoors when the weather went into single digits. “We found out the shelters are no good. They don’t have beds. You have to sit up and you can’t sleep.”

The winter also meant shorter days. The average person sees this as an inconvenience. Without electricity, the lack of light would limit his productiveness as well. “But then there’s no light, so you can’t work at nighttime, and the days get shorter, the only thing you can do is go outside for an hour,” he says. With nothing to do, it would be hard for him to keep moving, therefor losing heat. In the midst of winter, the sun is a source of heat, sometimes just enough to take off the chill.

He had found himself without a roof over his head after living with the same woman for almost twenty years. It was a rocky situation, not meant to last as long as it had. “I got divorced and there was no way for me to pay rent money,” He tells me how he was completely broke, and how he was surviving on Social Security disability checks. “There was no way for me to get an apartment by myself.” Not even

making enough money for monthly expenses, it seemed impossible to save up enough money to make the investment to get into an apartment.

Hap is finally indoors, for now. His new partner, who also relies on disability checks, had a pay discrepancy. She was given a huge lump sum from the state, and it was what they needed for the startup cost of an apartment.

“I pay seventeen hundred bucks to rent a place the size of someone’s porch. It’s a nice neighborhood though. No electricity included. But her retro pay is running out.”

He is living indoors on borrowed time. With no steady job or extra income, they have dwindled down and lived off of their extra money. He is not upset about the possibility of heading back outdoors, but upset that he hasn’t been spending this time preparing his camp for the winter.

Worry seemed to be the last thing on his mind, even when the possibility of this winter being spent outdoors loomed overhead. He knew that he will make do, and even seemed to look forward to getting back to his sense of normalcy. He *was* happy, but I called him Dad. ■

Charcoal Drawing | JON STRONACH







## Of Sense and Song by Julia McCarthy

She felt the song  
Heard a heart fracture  
And the notes weep  
As her ears saw  
What lips will not speak  
Fingers taste tears  
A heart holds memories  
The eyes sing to all  
A painful melody





*clockwise (from top left):*

Self-portrait | *OLIVIA DANTZLER*

Beautiful Sunset on Charles River | *PHONG HUYNH*

Upside Down World | *PHONG HUYNH*

## Afternoon Observation

by **Gabi Seaman**

The platform crumbles into green moss  
wood planks are set down in efforts to preserve  
But oh the forest grows back  
even behind the lumberyard,  
tossed garbage.

The earth always creeps about behind the cement jungle  
Here you can see a river,  
it's current attempts to overpower.  
Train tracks,  
It's occupants,  
I freeze in the eye of strangers  
I freeze in the eye of men who are strangers

Lord Jesus saves life etched onto withering stone  
I breathe and say lord please save the moss that tags along with life,  
Save my fingers from cracking like the platform surely will,  
I fear this fate  
this train stop holds  
Can you hear the war that prevails beneath the gravel  
The earth will always prevail

■



# Running Backwards

by Ryan Duggan

She was running. A treadmill would have been a better fit than the sidewalk, because she wasn't going to be getting anywhere. Already breathing heavily after only a few blocks, she'd keep moving until the pain in her chest and the choking dryness in her airway demanded that she couldn't go anymore. But it wasn't over yet; there was still more time to make progress. She wished to be better at running, maybe then her lungs wouldn't hurt so much. Walking was much more relaxing, but right now she didn't have the option to relax.

Breathing turned into panting, each inhale becoming shorter and more shallow as she turned the next corner. Running sucked. At least with other workouts she could stop for water between exercises. Over time, she knew she'd build up a tolerance- that's what she read. She wouldn't need the water as badly, and would still be able to burn her daily calories in a shorter and hopefully less gruesome time frame. After waking up today her mouth had only seen one glass of cold water to kick-start her metabolism and half a banana to fuel up for this run before doing the stretches she had learned online. Another glass of cold water was resting on the counter at home to quench her body's anticipated cries of help after she walked through the door, and the rest of her banana lounged beside it waiting to go with her cereal. Most people add fruit last, but she had learned that slicing the banana first- below the grains- helped to fill the bowl faster so she could trick herself out of overeating. It worked for her, and was a method she was proud to have independently come up with to help reach her goal by not taking as much food.

Panting became gulping as one foot was sluggishly thrown in front of the other. Normally she would do strength training to build muscle and in turn boost her metabolism, but she had read that all good workout routines were balanced. On days she ran or the occasional rest day she could drink green tea for the metabolism boost instead, the more calories her body burned on its own the better. Long and lean

was the ideal, and that was why she made herself run at least a few times a week on top of the other exercises. Some people just naturally had it, like her best friend who was absolutely gorgeous, but why not her? Why did her chubby phase from elementary school have to last so long? She knew there were plenty of people fatter than her, and wouldn't shame anyone for being fat, but she knew herself and knew she wanted to be better. Better than she was now, and then better and better. The more progress she made with her exercise and diet, the more acceptable she would look and the sooner her life would be back to normal. She couldn't afford to let cheating hold her back. Slipping up was the real killer, getting set back, why indulge in the first place if it's only going to delay your culmination?

Each exhale was a blatant plea for mercy, but she had to finish. Red faced and weak she forced herself on until her body suddenly gave in. Stomping through a slowdown she came to a standstill, and put her hands on her hips beginning to pace back and forth attempting to catch her breath. Turning to make her way home for a shower and sucking down more air, she thought about what she might make later for lunch and how it would draw from her self-allotted budget of 2,000 calories a day. That was the average, but she looked at it from a business standpoint. Anything leftover from the budget would turn into profit.

The girl known for her love of Oreos was changing, now eating raw vegetable sandwiches made with half a whole wheat pita even though she still couldn't quite stomach the taste of tomatoes. Buttery popcorn was gone from her life for now, replaced by the bowl of cold carrots that she forced down while watching movies. Supposedly if you eat them ten times you start to like them more, after that it's worth all the gagging. To her favor, she had recently found out she liked caesar salad, especially with slices of crisp, juicy apple mixed in. Still, as her diet continued she cut out the dressing to avoid the unnecessarily added unhealthy fats. Next went the cheese for the same reason, followed by the croutons with their uncontrollable carbs.



Dawn of a New Age | NICOLAS GONZALEZ

But she wasn't starving herself, she was just moderating like healthy people do. She never stopped eating, she just stopped eating the things that were bad for her as her diet became more and more restrictive, even the ones she used to love. One she met her goal, she'd allow herself to go back to eating that soft and creamy cookie dough ice cream, those lusciously soft whoopie pies, and the savory sauces that went so well over pasta. Until then, she was committed, and she was proud of herself for it. She saw her stomach shrink in the mirror, going by looks instead of by the scale. After all, that was what made sense to her, she didn't want to be obsessing over numbers like the anorexic girls, she just cared about how she looked. She made a point of stopping in the bathroom to look at herself, and if she didn't

like what she saw she'd do a few push-ups against the sink. It was all these little things, she felt, that would get her to her goal of being beautiful. It may have been a little extreme, but she fully believed that the harder she worked now the better she would be in the end. Extreme or not, who was anyone to tell her she couldn't work towards being healthy and comfortable in her own skin?

So yes, running sucked, and her body was still screeching for help even now that she was only walking, but she knew herself, and knew that she could do better. In her mind, she knew that there was no other option.

■





*clockwise (from top left):*  
Clocktower | *TIMOTHY FERRERA*  
Violet | *OLIVIA DANTZLER*

## Family Dinners

by **Ryan Duggan**

“Shit,  
nevermind, the chicken’s fine”  
“The potatoes need a few more minutes”  
“Do you think we’ll have enough?”  
“Whered she put the salad?”  
“No, go get more chip and dip”  
“Did anyone see the dog?”  
Okay, here we go  
Dinner’s done and Supper’s set

Fill a plate up and sit yourself down  
at the table  
“Pass the bread-  
no I want the end”  
“Shouldn’t we say Grace or something?”  
    “Grace”  
        “Grace”  
    “Grace”  
“Amen.”

Suddenly, for the split second between bites but  
before swallows,  
momentary silence sets in  
until

“What’d she say?”  
“That’s it? Eat more!”  
“Whatsamadaya not hungry?”  
“Take some home we made all this food!”  
“GET THE DOG OFF THE TABLE!”  
“Are you sure you don’t wanna try some?”  
“What’s for dessert?”  
“Yes, you can have another brownie”

Laughing faces, dirty looks  
Light, noise, and love  
Family may be-  
well  
Family is crazy,  
but dinner doesn’t get much better than this

Time to go and do the dishes











## Freckles

by **Gabi Seaman**

I chose to grow with my vessel  
Turn my chin toward the sky  
Introducing hidden life to the sun  
In hopes she will bless them with her warm kisses, love bites  
Marking me for the time being  
A trademark I've been working to expand

■

*clockwise (from top left):*

Friendship Forever | *PRITAM BARUA*

Innocent and Curious | *PRITAM BARUA*

Photography | *HAILEY SANPHY*



# Cold

by Deanna McCallum

“When I think about my childhood, I think about two things, potted plants and fog. I think about my parents buying a potted plant, ready to take care of it, ready to watch it grow and flourish, but instead bringing it home and placing it on the farthest windowsill from the sun, without water, without love, without care. The once beautiful baby plant with its bright green leaves and moist soil begins to brown and dry, withering slowly away until it’s dying in a place where it thought it was safe. When I think about my childhood, I think about people in the morning, driving their cars over a bridge on a day when the fog is so thick that you can’t see anything in front of you, with no one and nothing in sight. Fog so thick, that it feels like a nightmare where everything could come crashing down in an instant.”

“Must be some headache.” The short, red haired store clerk looks at me with a sly half grin, proud of herself, as if she’s been waiting all day to make that joke. I force out a quiet chuckle twisting my head around to avoid any more conversation. “That’ll be \$12.35, dear.” I reach into my over-sized grey Nike sweater, to pull out a crumpled up 20-dollar bill, and hand it over. She smiles wide and begins to take the money, then pauses at the sight of the thick pink scars covering the entirety of my left arm. I pull back to avoid the judgmental green eyes of the once gentle woman on the other side of the counter. My fingers sweep softly over the lumpy scars and bring me back to the first time I took a fresh silver blade to my fragile skin, slicing so deep that the pain in my mind didn’t exist anymore and was instead replaced by the silky tears of fluorescent red blood. “Miss? MISS!?” I snap out of my memory and stare blankly ahead. She’s holding out the small bag and

my change with a confused look on her face. “Have a good night, ma’am.” I take the bag and sputter out “thanks” while wondering if this innocent woman will ever know about the gift she has given me. I walk out of Rite Aid, onto the corner of Rantoul and Cabot in Beverly, Massachusetts and begin my short walk home. My breath comes out in heavy gasps as if I’m shivering from the cold, the sky dark, no stars or moon visible. Melting snow squashes beneath my black felt boots, leaving the last tracks I’ll ever make behind me, along with every broken feeling I’ve felt over the past 15 years. It takes me less than ten minutes to reach my tawny, dilapidated house in the middle of Bennett Street, between the burned down apartment building on the right and the empty, grass-less yard on the left. I walk into the strange place I’ve been forced to call home, as empty as my insides, and up the creaky old stairs and into my lilac bedroom, shutting the brown door behind me. Climbing onto my queen sized bed, I grab the sleeping pills from underneath my mattress, the same pills my mother’s antique red nightstand, and place them on the purple pillow in front of me, followed by the family-sized aspirin bottle I just purchased moments before. I pour the aspirin onto the pillow beside the sleeping pills, staring at the powdery white tablets inviting me into their warm embrace. I smile a sigh of relief because, although death may be terrifying, the idea of life tomorrow is simply heartbreaking. The truth is, you can’t leave your loved ones behind when the ones who are supposed to love you never bothered. I close my eyes, taking in one last breath, before I begin swallowing.

I can barely make out a blurry man in a blue and white uniform, squeezing an IV bag full of thick



Lost Flower | *MATTHEW MACDONALD*

black liquid while I feel a stinging sensation in my forearm. There's a jumble of words coming towards me from either side of my head and the incredibly high-pitched ringing in my ears. A shrill woman shouting, "WHAT DID YOU DO?" And the white and blue blur saying, "Stay awake, Deanna." The bumps and rattles of the road tell me we're in an ambulance. The loud sirens tell me we're in a hurry. Drifting in and out of consciousness, I see an old lady in a red Honda from the back of the ambulance. She looks concerned. I silently ask her the same question I've been asking everyone my whole life. "Can you see me?" My eyelids are heavy, and I hear one last "stay with" before allowing myself to disappear into the darkness.

The smell of burning rubber is the first thing I taste. I see my father on the right side of the bed, next to a Boston Children's Hospital poster on the pale-yellow wall. I look out the window and see dawn peeking through the shades. "Crap." I whisper, wondering how they found me. My father looks tired, his hair a shuffled mix of brown and grey, the bags under

his eyes prominent. His eyes are icy cold like a fist formed around his heart. "You know I have to miss work tomorrow because of this, right?" Michael has never been particularly feeling. I see that same bag of thick, black liquid attached to a tube inside of my nose. Maybe I should be grateful for being alive. Maybe I didn't really think this through. Maybe I should have used a gun.

I wish I could tell that young, broken girl what she so badly needed to hear back then. That life would be hard sometimes but the happy days would be so much better than bad ones. I would tell her about the times she would smile and laugh harder than she could ever imagine. Maybe she felt like a nuisance, and maybe she was unloved, but she would one day be able to choose the people who would make her feel full, instead of empty. She would see the sunshine that had been stolen from her at such a young age. I would tell her that she wouldn't just be alive. She would live.

■







# Aging Gracefully

by Ryan Duggan

I'm sorry,  
who says dinosaur  
chicken nuggets  
are only for kids

If I'm going to eat a nugget,  
it darned better be a triceratops

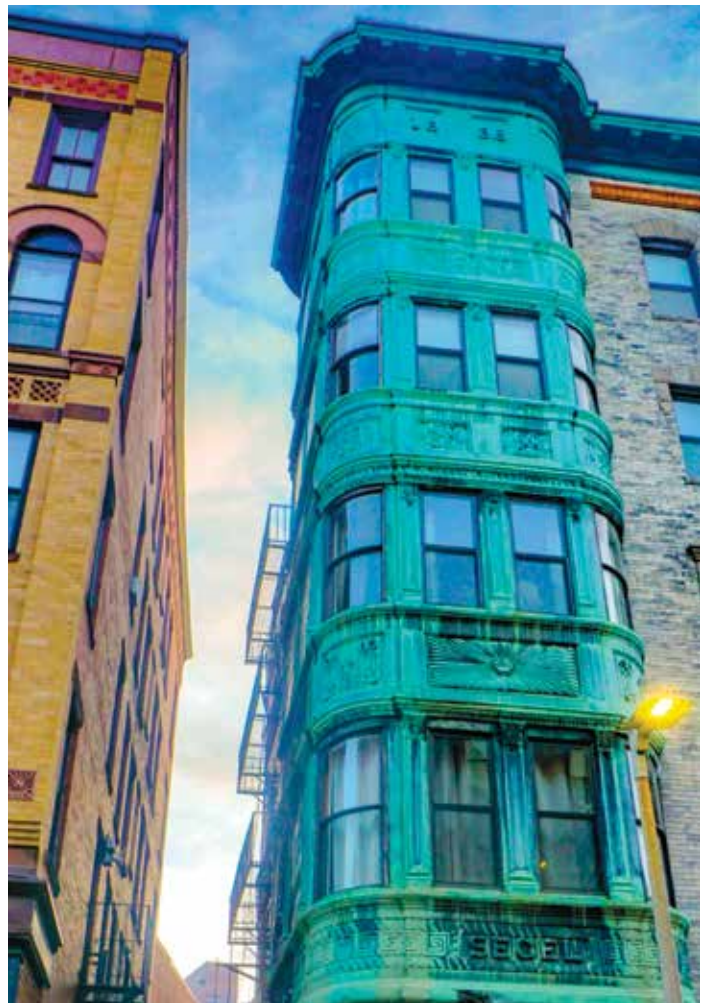
Otherwise,  
the smiley face I made in my mashed potatoes  
would be lonely

You can bet when I turn twenty-one,  
I'm gonna go and have some fun,  
and treat myself to a wine glass full  
of organic apple juice

I'll play Candy Land with you,  
but I get to be the yellow one  
and after this we're playing Lego's

My I.D. thinks I'm an adult,  
and I am,  
but my heart accepts  
that our childhood can't be outgrown

■



*clockwise (from top left):*

Mixed media on canvas | *ANDREA BADOLATO*

Point of View | *MATTHEW MACDONALD*

North End Architecture | *ADDISON KIELPINSKI*

Bebe Piece | *CHRIS TOPPIN*

Silhouette | *HAILEY SANPHY*

# Losing Our Mind

by **Sophia Deleon**

They say spending time alone is good for the mind  
But do they know about a sickness called loneliness?  
Negative thoughts and emotions that intertwine  
Losing the sense of self which leads to this war of madness

The loneliness that drives someone beyond the limits to seek validation  
Feeling as if the body is craving to medicate  
Isolating from all humankind to lose connection  
Searching preached goddesses with “perfection” to imitate

Looking for love and affection from any stranger  
Because nothing works and we feel the need to be molded  
Letting in the deadly eyed ones who scream danger  
To take advantage of the naked soul that needed to be unfolded

Attention is taken away against our own will that builds this wall of fury  
As an electric shock signals to begin the violent voices in our head  
Tormenting on how other’s lives are of much more value that it creates envy  
Unstitching a month’s worth of tears and letting the wound be open instead

Being told by many that self love is to be found through change  
That the belief of the ideal image should be suppressed  
And old habits and addictions needs to be exchanged  
To live content with one’s self and live a life with no stress

Reminiscing on our childhood and reflecting on the past  
Questioning on how we can overcome a pessimistic perception  
Burying alive the inner critic that makes the misery last  
To start believing that the impossible is a misconception

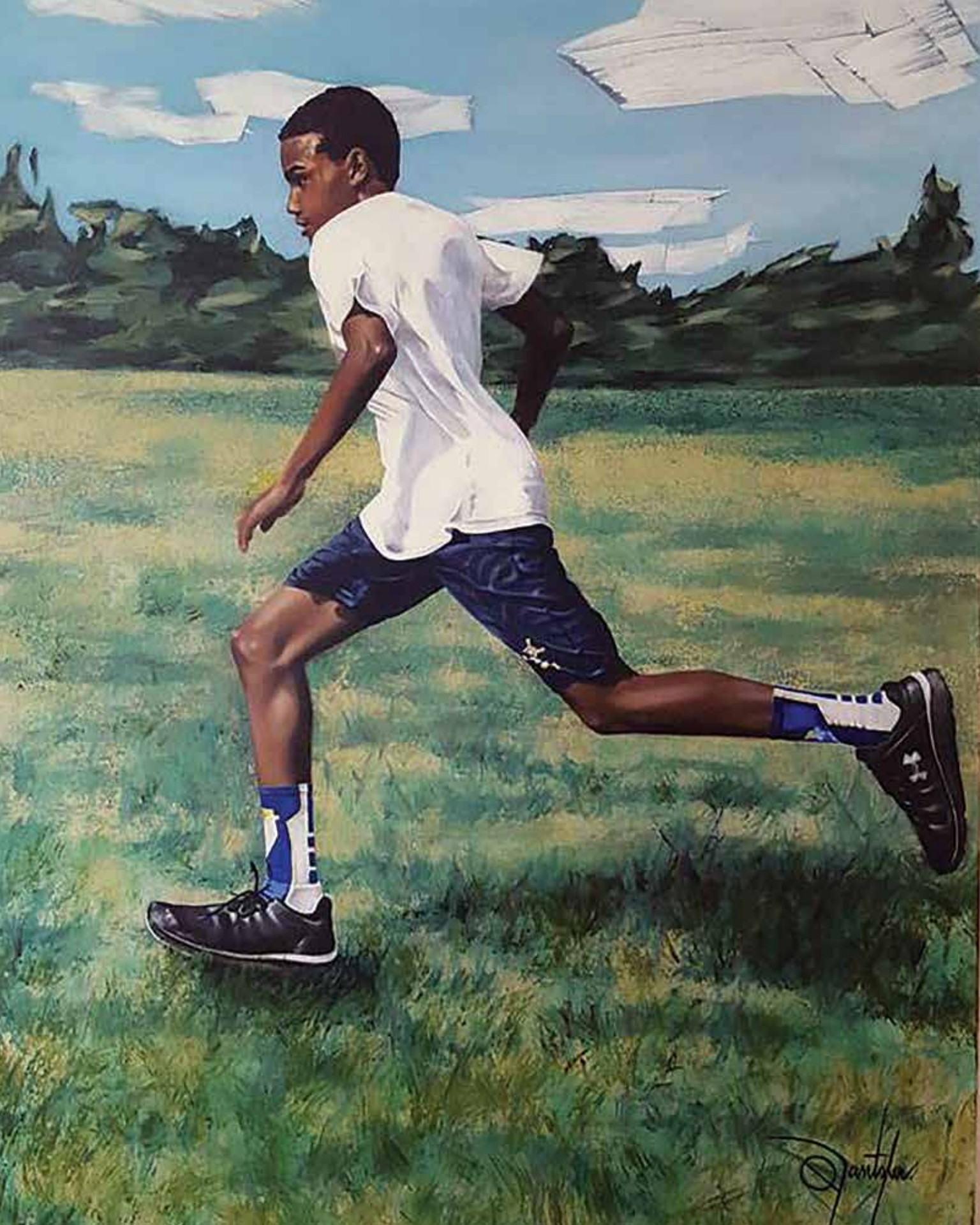
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*from top to bottom:*  
Simple Joy | CHRIS TOPPIN  
1967 Shelby | REBECCA GOSIEWSKI









*Quintana*

**KADEEM ANTOINE**

Graphic Design Student Volunteer  
*Spark Magazine Design and Layout*

**BONNIE ASHMORE**

Professor  
NSCC Cultural Arts Department, Art  
*Spark Art Committee Judge; Spark Launch Committee*

**KRISTALYN BURNS**

Professor  
NSCC Computer Science Program  
*Spark Art Committee Judge*

**LAURIE CARLSON**

Professor  
NSCC English Department  
*Spark Literary Committee Judge*

**JIM CHISHOLM**

Professor  
NSCC Cultural Arts Department, Art  
*Spark Art Committee Judge*

**AMANDA DOOLING**

Director of Student Engagement  
*Spark Coordinator*

**BRIAN FALTER**

Special Programs Coordinator  
*Spark Reviewer*

**SANDRA FUHS**

Program Coordinator  
NSCC Graphic Design Program  
*Spark Art Committee Judge; Spark Magazine Layout*

**FOSTER HITCHMAN**

Graphic Design Student Volunteer  
*Spark Art Committee Judge*

**SAMANTHA ROUSSEAU**

Graphic Design Student Volunteer  
*Spark Magazine Design and Layout*

**JANIS SOFERR**

Professor  
NSCC English Department  
*Spark Literary Committee Judge*

**CHRIS TOPPIN**

Graphic Design Student Volunteer  
*Spark Magazine Launch Committee*

**JOHN ZAMPARELLI**

Professor  
NSCC English Department  
*Spark Literary Committee Judge*

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Cross-country | *OLIVIA DANTZLER*

Boston Harbor at Night | *PHONG HUYNH*







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