

# THE RACKET | 34



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Hi.

How is everyone?

Seriously though: close your eyes for a second, take one, enormous, deep breath and ask yourself, "How am I doing right now?"

Just put your phone down, maybe turn the television off, pry yourself away from whatever it is your using to dampen down the weight of reality and take an accounting of how it is you're doing in this flaming blackhole of a moment. Ask yourself:

"How is this continuing shitstorm we call human existence in America in the early 21st Century affecting my mental state?"

I spent most of last Wednesday - as I imagine many of you did - staring slack-jawed at the news as fur-clad conspiracy theorists overran a scant security force and broke into the United States Capital Building intending to kidnap and possibly murder many of the elected officials of our country. A mob of humanity who believe (amongst other things) that a cabal of liberal pedophiles run the world and soon-to-not-be-President Donald J. Trump is the God-chosen "warrior" who will unearth and destroy them, they smashed out the windows of the political center of America to (badly) foment revolution. Selfies were taken.

This happened. In the midst of a pandemic that has killed nearly 400,000 people, this happened. And now, with a new president only a few days away from taking office, our cities are full of National Guardsmen, whole streets sealed off with barbed wire and chainlink fence because no one knows what happens next. This isn't a comic book or a trashy political thriller. It isn't a bad Bruce Willis flick from the mid-00s. It is reality that we are a part of.

And I'm going to be honest, I don't exactly know how we're all coping. I'm not entirely sure how *I'm* getting through it. How I'm managing to perform the simplest responsibilities of being an adult when, without exaggeration, it feels like the world is falling apart.

I'm often guilty of deeming some new travesty splashed across the news as "the same old shit." Another turn around the sun with powerful people being terrible and the rest of us suffering through the consequences. There's comfort in repetition. If it's happened before, I can place it in context, I can file it away with everything else I can barely comprehend. I can shake my head and say, "Wowee, what a fucked up world" and move past.

This though, this I'm struggling with. This doesn't feel like the same old shit. If you were watching (and I'm guessing you were) what we saw in America last week was a brand new form of madness. It was decidedly not the "same old shit."

With this in mind, I just want to make sure you're checking in with yourself, your friends, your family, those around you and acknowledging that these are extremely intense times and that they are affecting us in strange ways. And they will continue to do so for a long, long time.

Recognize this and be a just a touch more gentle with yourself and with others.

We are all going through a lot. Don't forget that.

'Till next time.

-N

The Racket stands against  
police brutality, racism and violence  
perpetuated towards BIPOC  
communities in all forms.

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THE RACKET : QUARANTINE JOURNAL, Vol. 2, NO. 34

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Title/Date: *Zhavedan Dulha*, جاودان دلہا

Website: <https://www.zulfikaralibhuttoart.org/>

IG: [@zulfikaralibhutto](https://www.instagram.com/zulfikaralibhutto)

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*it's a lot. A lot-a-lot.*

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# WE HAVE A PATREON

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We aren't in this for the money.

That said: there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

If so, we're working on some special rewards. And we know you love special rewards.

## THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

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# Ted Cruz Ponders the Constitution

ADRIENNE PILON

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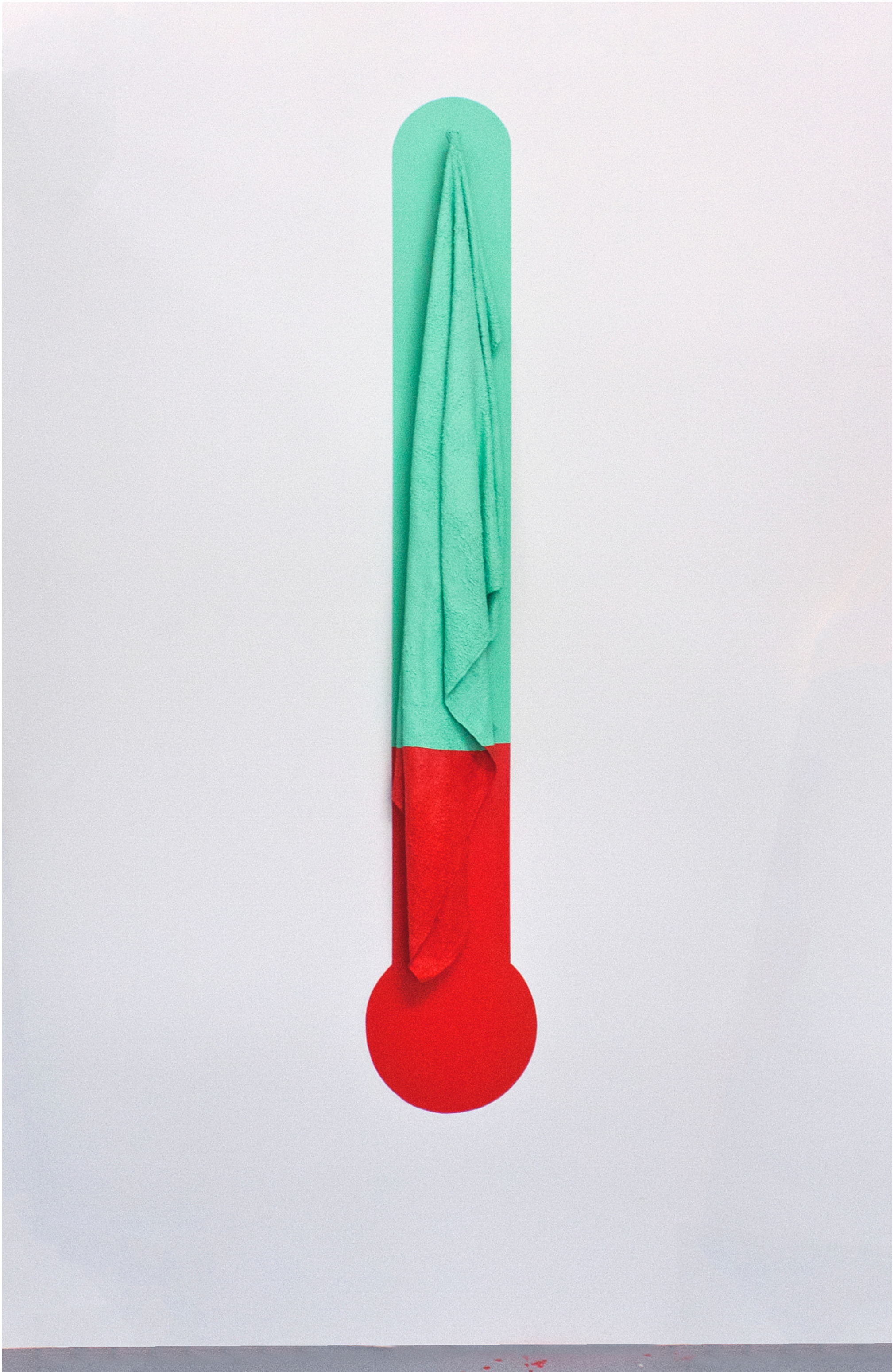
It's a good day for deer. The expanse of Texas is spread out under a blue sky and this, he thinks, is what freedom looks like. The heft of gun in hand is satisfying, the black flash

In the sun. A man can be an artist with a hunting rifle, sending a bullet like a song over desert sere. Compromise is an art, too, he says to himself in the mirror, later.

And laws must be faithfully executed, even when it means executions. There's the decision to shave, or not. Chinese censorship is an evil and is also

Against the First Amendment. Ted remembers, too, that he stands for Human Rights for Cameroonians. It's about The Pursuit of Happiness, about

Life and Liberty. Which is precious. Dipping out of the chamber, tipping his mask, he leans down, asks the Senator from Utah, *What do you think of my beard?*



TOWEL THERMOMETER  
SOFIE RAMOS  
2018

# Reaching Out

JONATHAN BRACKER

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Considering phoning a friend,  
Edwin decides not to.

This morning his friend may be  
As unhappy as he and perhaps as scared.  
He understands that she  
May be doing exactly the same –

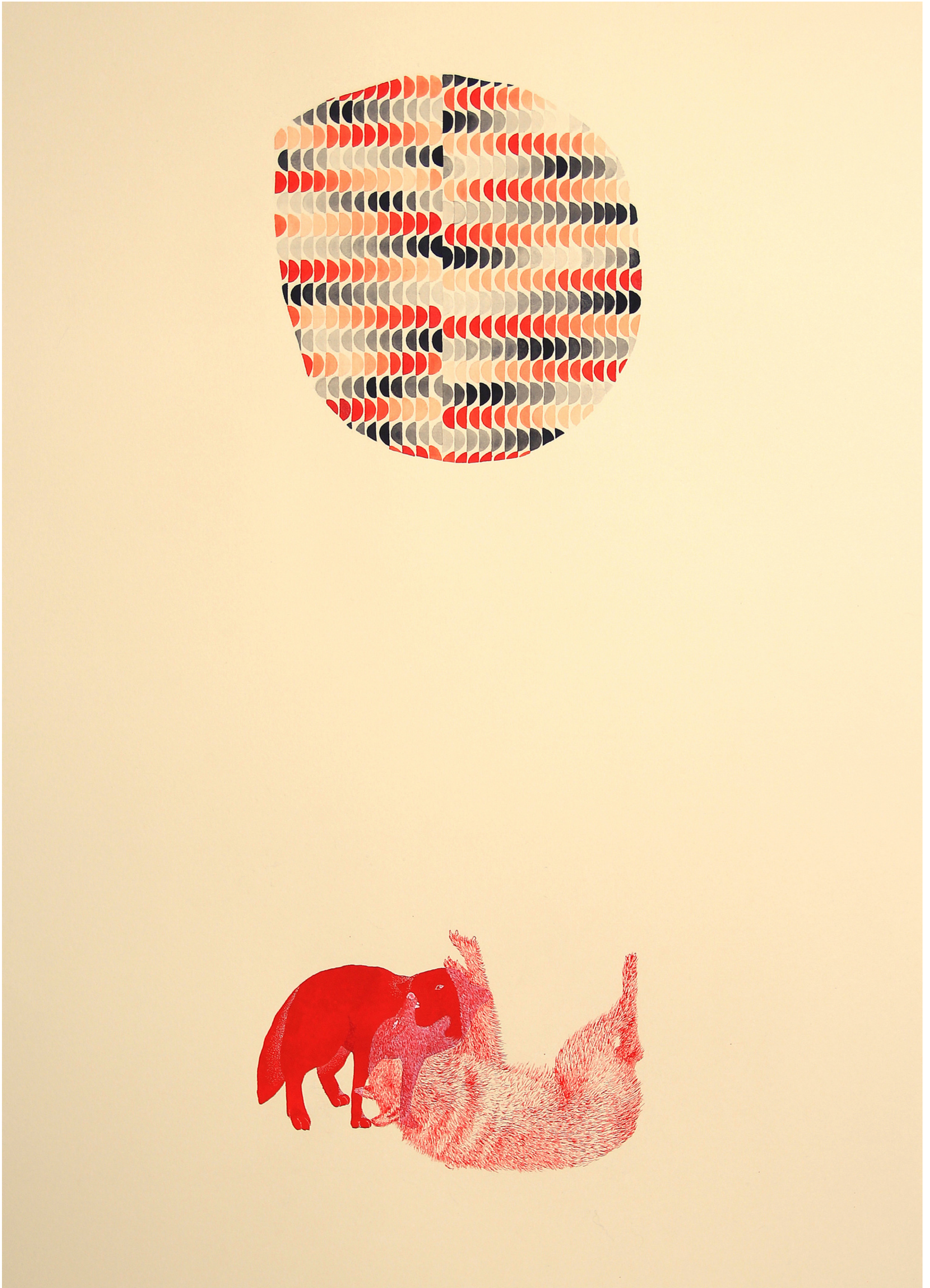
Considering reaching out  
And then deciding against it.

The thought does not immediately console  
But soon Edwin imagines her  
As having the same image in her mind  
Which has just now come into his:

At the zoo as a child, standing before a cage  
With a monkey in it, nervously shifting

From leg to leg while wondering just how far  
That old chimpanzee's reaching arm through the mesh  
Would go, and whether it could grab and hurt her hand  
If she ducked into her bag of popcorn

To offer it a snack.  
And that does help a little.



HELPLESSNESS IN HOPEFULNESS (RED VOLVES)  
MASAKO MIKI  
2013

# All of My Women Dance On It

SARA MARTIN

---

each time something dies my kitchen floor becomes more quiet I put my ear down  
smudge the oil of today she tells me after we carry the dresser up my stairs that zoe  
got hit by a car the saturday before thanksgiving my face rubs against pebbles its  
the first thing thats cool the sludge I am she gets me fat onion fat beers I  
drill a hole through the floor to make sure I'm not dead only my animal is only  
large cysts of what I squeeze all of my women dance on it I watch erins big fields  
of somethings going around my head leenie pulls my hand I dont think sex is a  
part of me till I dance with young cousins big fields of somethings big fields that  
megans horses are probably running around and she is probably buckling her  
shoes mama hands me a big spoon to sing all them watch my face till I turn into  
shirley temple again and go on my knees for religion and suck it till it's dry all I  
need is attention all I need to run, she says once more, I watch sorrow the only  
quiet is dads playmate cooler outside on the back porch I'm the only one that lives  
in this spot I want to be back in the womb so she won't ask me any more questions  
today the only somethings big fields of somethings right in my front yard



ASKING WOLF  
MASAKO MIKI  
2013

# California is not the only beautiful place to live

AMELIA FURLONG

---

all my friends live in California & are flat broke  
rationing gasoline & awaiting my return.

sometimes I feel so much like memory's bitch I gotta wonder  
what's her agenda? succubus (black collar starched

sipping microbrews on the porch of some trustfund's Victorian)  
turning California sunlight into gold

streaming through the air like wildfires. I sold my stake  
for Bitcoin, bite down & it tastes like helium

now I dine out five nights a week with the villains  
of the Barbary Coast. can't say I blame them

capitalism kills & sometimes you just need a drink &  
a summer vacation. or sometimes

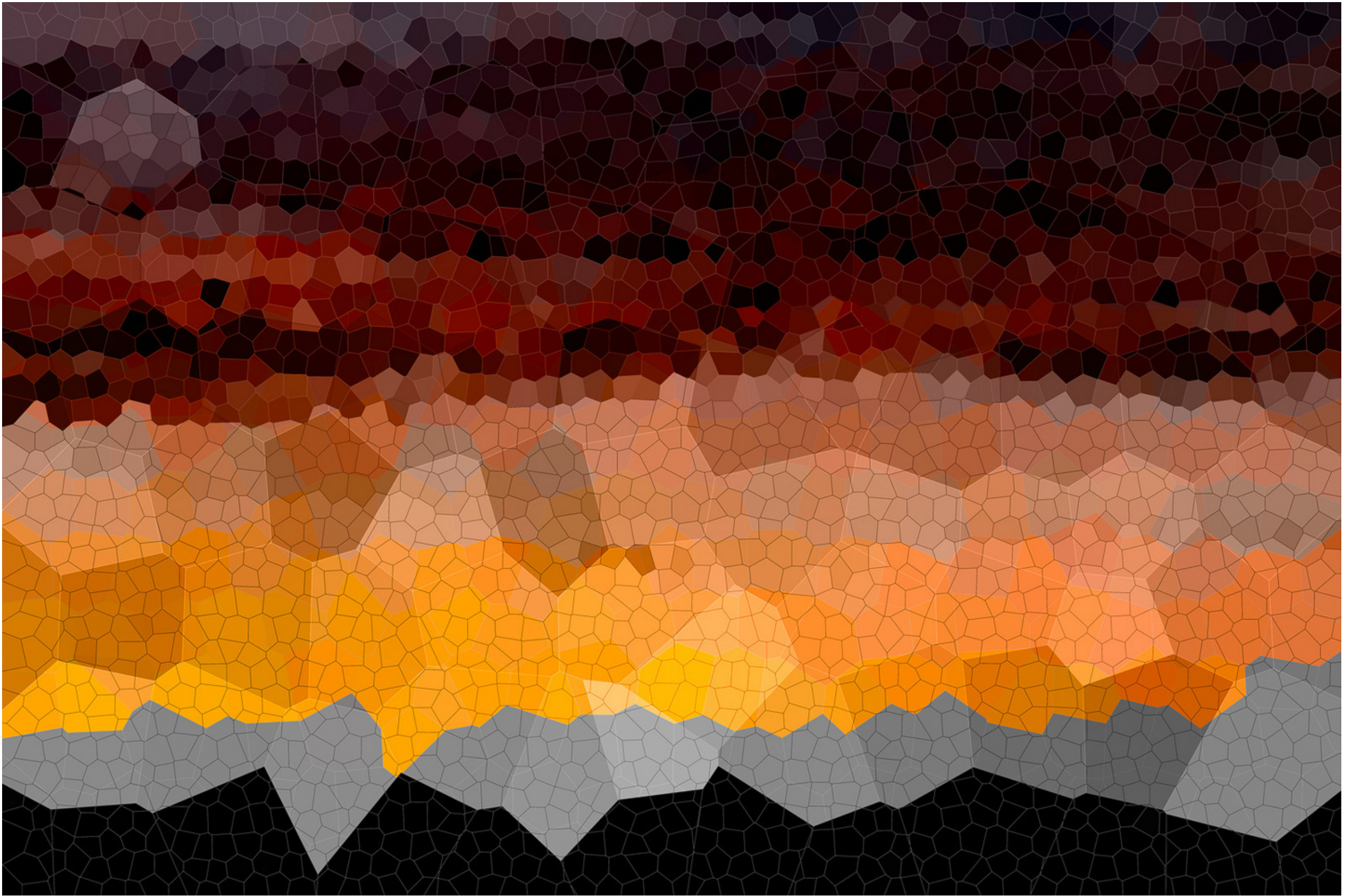
sunlight is just the sun trying to fuck  
a plant & California is not the only place

it shines.





COLORS OF ESCAPE #5  
YVONNE DALSCHE  
2020



COLORS OF ESCAPE #4  
YVONNE DALSCHEIN  
2020

# Yesterday

JORRELL WATKINS

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Tasted dank.

Slurped, dripped  
sloshed under.

Stood, sank. Felt  
deep take, shade  
ablution. Evening

nocturnes flushed.  
Wail everywhere's  
crypt. Harrowing

silence know sol;  
belie. Alive, uncertain  
condition depends—

who's looking?  
Great trouble, toggle:  
neighbor, vigilant.

Pursue dilemma  
streetlight-streetlight;  
watchtowers. Shelter

off kilter, dim  
drawn vagabond  
no land's vault.



*COLORS OF ESCAPE #6*  
YVONNE DALSCHE  
2020

# CONTRIBUTORS

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ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO JR.

JONATHAN BRACKER

YVONNE DALSCHEIN

AMELIA FURLONG

SARA MARTIN

MASAKO MIKI

ADRIENNE PILON

SOFIE RAMOS

JORRELL WATKINS

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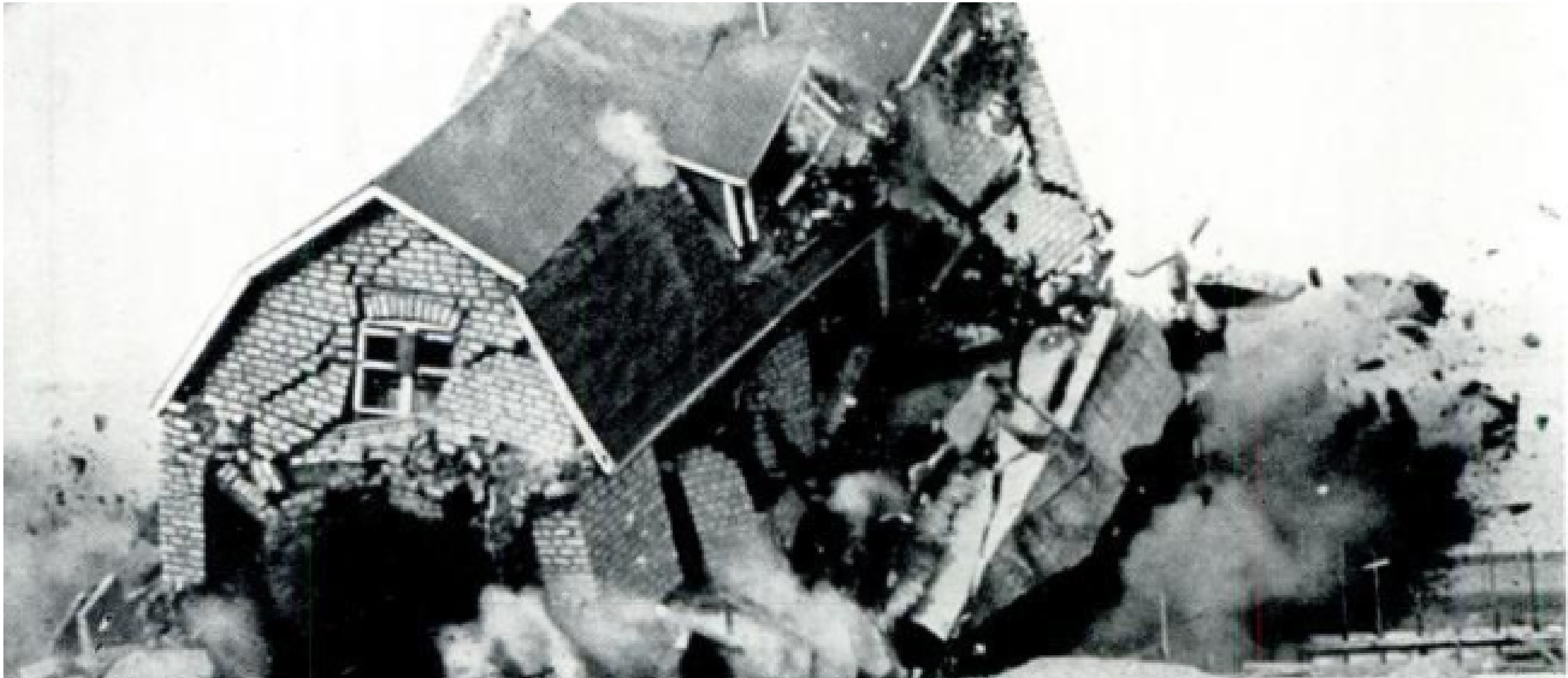
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# THE RACKET

READING SERIES

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# RESTART

1/28  
7PM  
ZOOM



**BEGINNING?  
END?  
DOES IT MATTER?**

