

THE RACKET | 55



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Hi.

How is everyone?

I am a bit of a compulsive news reader. The type of person who against all advice wakes up at 5:30 in the morning and immediately starts consuming whatever deluge of misery the media has to offer. No matter how much I wince my way through the proceedings, it has been a beloved morning ritual.

As of late though, it has devolved into enough of a chore that where once I just flipped my phone on and started obsessing, now I wait, eyes open in the grey light of dawn, wondering if I have it in me to see what's happening in the world.

Part of this is, clearly, because the front page of any given newspaper in 2021 reads like a Greatest Hits of tragedy and though I do believe that most major newspaper's front pages have always read this way, I can only consume so many articles about climate change and the rising extinction list before I just want to roll over and sleep forever.

More so, reading the news has become tiresome. I am exhausted by the fact that the front page of the newspapers has turned into a well-researched version of a daily soap opera, in which a character's journey from the kitchen to the wine rack to the sofa can take months of incremental movement.

And, clearly, this is not the fault of the newspaper, rather I'm pointing a finger at the grime-caked wheels of the doddering machine that we somehow still refer to as democracy. I'm talking about the idea that after centuries of willfully neglecting enormous issues—social, political, scientific—the chickens have come home to roost and we are now as a society, a civilization, quite possibly a species, toeing the finish line. The world, our country specifically, is in mass disarray and when you flip to the front page of The New York Times you don't see a group of capable leaders pushing towards fast, efficient and *necessary* change. You see argument. You see debate. You see politicians pleading with each other to consider thinking about a subject, let alone push forward any sort of initiative or legislation that might enact noticeable change.

Don't get me wrong, I am all about hammering out the nuance, about heady debate and argument when time permits. In my opinion, though—with climate change stretching summer temperatures into early October and America, for a nth straight year, struggling to keep the government's lights on—time no longer permits.

I truly believe that the reason why The United States leaves such a bad taste in the collective mouth right now is because with the world stumbling towards an endpoint, we are fighting over minutia. We are clamoring over what shade of blue to paint the living room while this rickety house we've built collapses around us. We as a country look petty and, frankly put, dumb, because instead of working our asses off to address the grand problems at hand, we are happily nitpicking ourselves into obsolescence.

It is, clearly, the moment for big, bold action.

Terrifyingly enough, it seems more and more, regardless of the desperate need for movement, we are still, as a country, forced to wait and see.

'Till next time.

- N

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police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
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Leafy peepers.

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WE HAVE A PATREON

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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MONOCHROME STUDY IN TORRIT GREY
CARLA WEEKS
2020

Sol

KATE WYLIE

he says i put too much “u” in it
sol sol sol he repeats & repeats
until we’re lying on a bed of nails

he says *la fe muere en la oscuridad*
while mine languishes in an open window
i’m learning to pray in another language

he says he’s never loved a blonde woman before
i believe him because it’s easy
wild onions sprout against the house

he says corn grows taller in mexico
missouri & kansas are sisters in a hotel bed
i learn how to make mole from scratch

he says palabras have rigidity & *ironía* dies
telephone wires gleam with red foil balloons
the nearest coast is almost two thousand miles away

he says we need to celebrate more
mira mira mira this is my armor
tides keep sweeping seaweed away from the shore

he says being a father is hard work
& laughs when i refer to poetry as a *field*
every corner gets imperceptibly bluer

he says fate can't possibly be explained
a new moon is rising fast over the horizon
my bilingual dictionary provides no direct translation for the term *heartache*

he says we'll regret this but i do already
the past and future are colliding right now
& right now & right now & right now

he says sometimes i appear in his dreams as a white horse
i live in a wildfire meadow
where no rain falls

he says i put too much "u" in it
& after all this time
i still do



ELEMENT #12
CARMEN MCNALL
2020

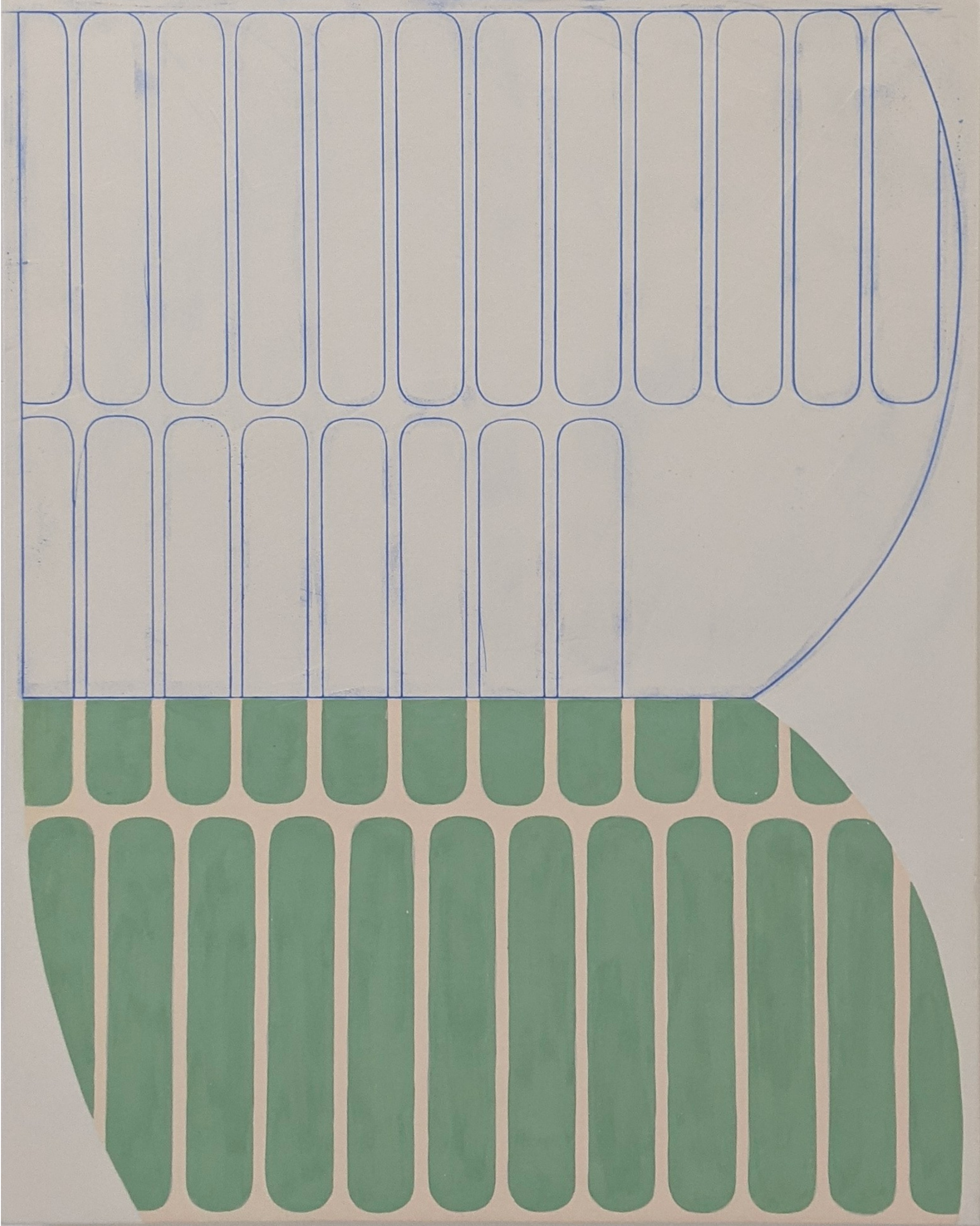
treillage fence

DANAE YOUNGE

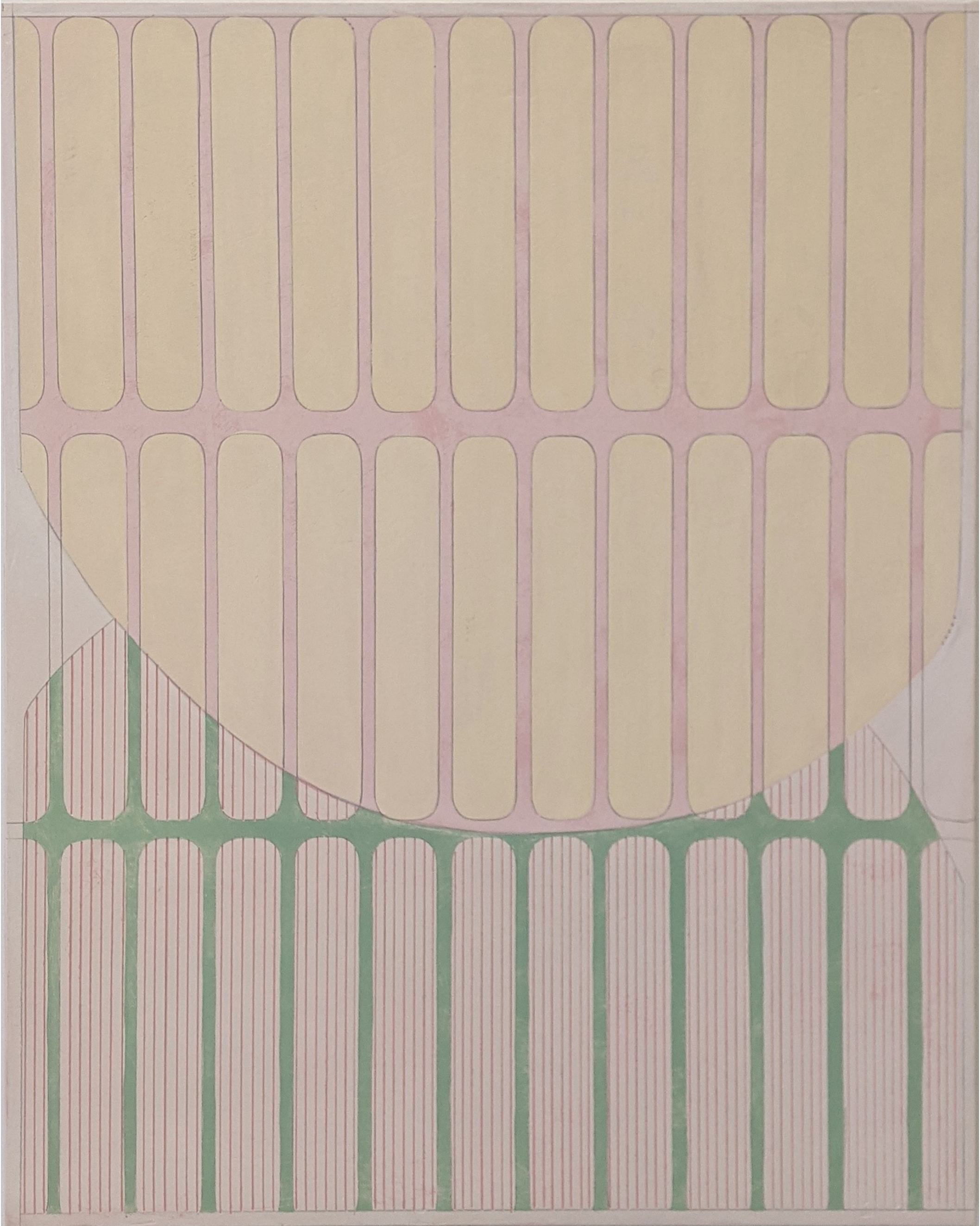
Young Timycha's cheekbones,
blushing Honeycrisps kiss splinters
like the ever-rotting fruits,
cherry red lipstick sucking
on an estranged mother, a timber frame.
You can see all the children,
some on tippy toes in the glass heels
of a budding summer threatening permanence,
others bent into polygons,
knees digging like the painted trellis.
They look through gaps like lorgnettes
after discovering they can,
the way they tumble their existence
into nooks of light simply by leaning in.

Timycha asks,
"Are you one of us, or did you decide
it better to never peek across than do so
through the eyes of a wooden mask?"

She knows the answer by the way
your mouth parts to respond:
by whether or not your tongue dares
speak louder than her breathing.



FIELD MAPS
ARIELLE ZAMORA
2021



GREEN IRON
ARIELLE ZAMORA
2021

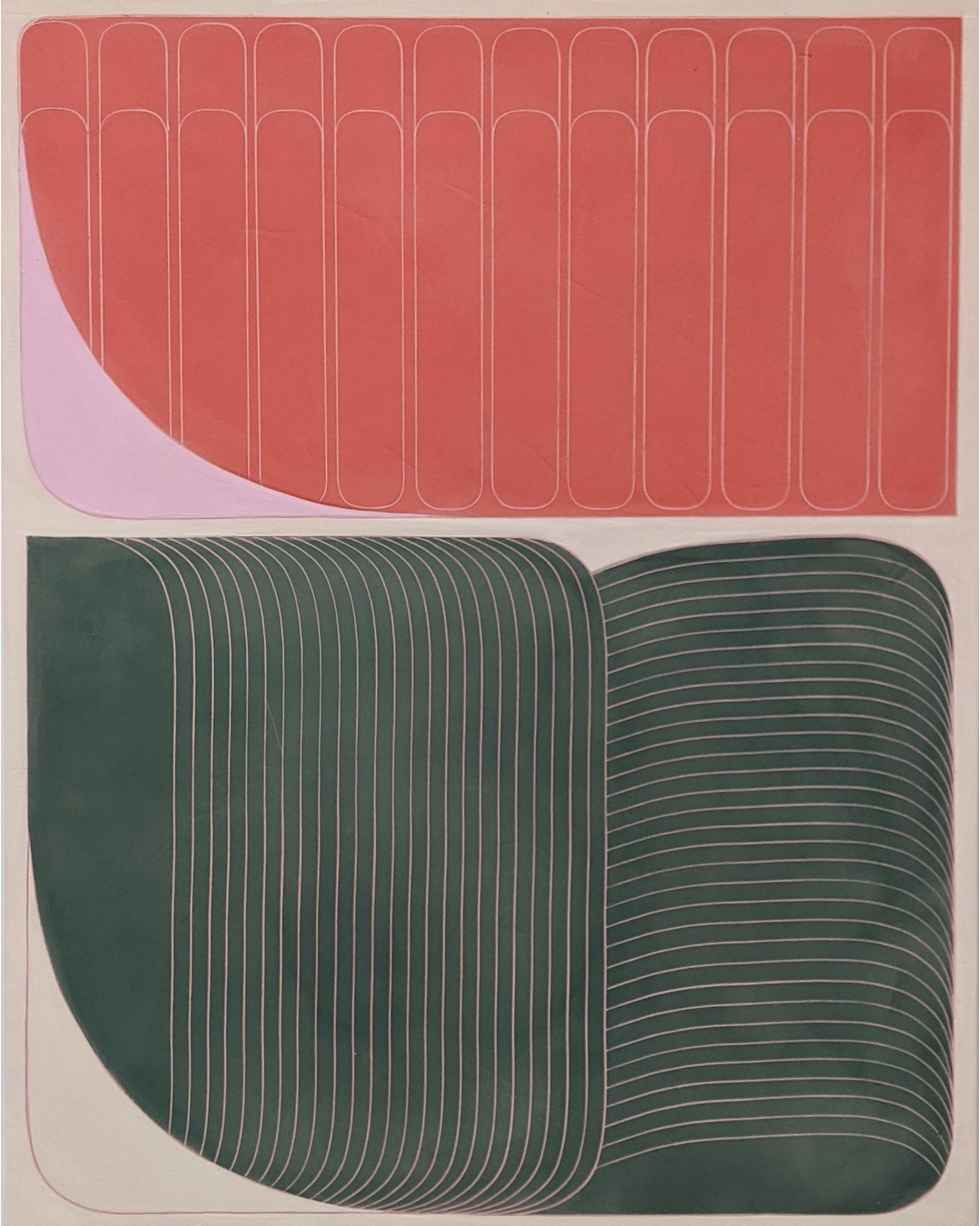
Bad Dreams, 2014

LEXI COVALSEN

In May I think about sleep every day. The first day of spring comes with ice cream, arson, and orange slices; bad sex and all the rest. In May, I study under trees. Acorns sogged by rain drop and burst on the pages of my textbook and the cold of the school year does not leave. I bite at my goosebumps like a dog picking fleas but they come back each time, like a freckle or a cavity or a sadness. The exposed nerve of summer waits for me somewhere I can see the corner of it peeking out behind a tree branch. She drips from my nose, a liquid toothache – pearl white, anxious to the touch.

June is the pink bedroom I stay up all night in reading secret pink books. I have dreams I spent six years wasting away standing on the diving board too afraid to jump, another four too afraid to step into the house – my whole body red and wide-winged, on fire outside the kitchen door. In June, I never leave my bed, live on sour tap water and Stendell pianos. I sleep all day, staring at the sun through the big windows of Grandma’s sewing room and when I close my eyes the whole world is mommy-red, warm, and guiding. I spiral all night, my thoughts dripping out onto the pillow like pool water or mucus or music. Daylight dreaming is beautiful and real and she knows me; milk tacky like shame falls all over my skin. The ghost of Sylvia Plath stands outside my window, her knees covered in pollen like lotion, she says “Stop writing poems about me you don’t know me.” I say “Okay sorry” and then sleep for another seven hours. Life lives in the back-porch ceiling light out by the swimming pool with all my morning mosquitos and the hummingbird feeder and the tomato plant and Miss Westbrook’s tabby cat. They whistle the days together and leave on the same train, Norfolk Southern west line, in the winter. For now they bloom and wait for me through the window pane. I don’t know if I will meet them before it is over. Sleep and sun and some song I heard forever ago, the one I’m sure I’m dancing baby naked to on a VHS tape somewhere, sits soft like blood swimming just below the skin of my cheeks – hot and nowhere to go.

July is the rat who keeps haunting our floorboards in the night. I have half-dreams about him where he dances and loves and sometimes I see him running laps around my bedroom wall, going around and around spinning wildly. Sleep is red and meaner now and filled with rats I keep trying to clutch in my hands and make them tell me they don't hate me. In July, my smile hides from me behind my kneecaps for a whole month, a place she knows I can't reach. Grandma says I need to get out of the house, so I'm out of the house and I'm sitting in the library cold to the bone and not quite there and everything smells like a memory already three thousand years away. I'm in the library shelving Goosebumps DVDs and somewhere in my head I don't exist anymore – dead in some bottled, embarrassment room – but this moment goes on and on and girls always stand in the library in the summer. Everything in Georgia always smells like chlorine and popcorn in the summer, anyways. Who am I to think I have to be there to feel it at all. In a full-dream, I am kissing the hind legs of the rat who lives beneath the floorboards. I say “You're the same kind of bad as me” and we laugh and we laugh and laugh. A heartbreak as hard as breakfast.



KEEP IT LIKE A SECRET
ARIELLE ZAMORA
2021

The Yellow House Loop & The Snake

JACQUELINE SUSKIN

I decided to walk the trail
even though the sun had already set.
I said hello to the hawthorn
draped in moss. When I knew
that no one could see me, I ran
up the hill. I chose a fork
I'd never noticed and ended
up in a thick grove of redwoods.
Although I tripped on sticks
and snagged my pants on bramble,
I could easily see the snake
on the path. Its body
a smooth line to crouch for,
to talk to. Seeing it made me
special, gave me the sense
of belonging, told me
I was in place. I said
not everyone loves you,
but somehow we are kin.



ELEMENT #10
CARMEN MCNALL
2020

The Last Rock Star in Los Angeles

PAUL CORMAN-ROBERTS

it's harder to burn out
when you won't fade away
whose to blame
? fa la da dee
the poet's life's for me

it never happens the way you think it will
lounging in the threshold room
waterbed reclined between cocktails
easy laughter; sixth or seventh viewing
of the Lightning Hopkins doc

The Rainbow is there but not there
the regular's stool is there but not there
we never see larger than life anymore
all the old joints are off the archetypal radar
faint dust outlines of famous corpses
float along the bar rail

Scantly clad, scandalously young wife
at the tender age of eighty six
Still forty years his junior
sleeps next to his fabled body
as he bridges in his sleep

To say he was bedridden
was never truer on every level
his vehicle seeking any and all
comfort in all the storms,
in all the ports of California



MONOCHROME STUDY IN BLUSH
CARLA WEEKS
2020

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THING BEFORE
YOU GO-O.**

