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The School of the Art Institute of Chicago arts, culture, and politics

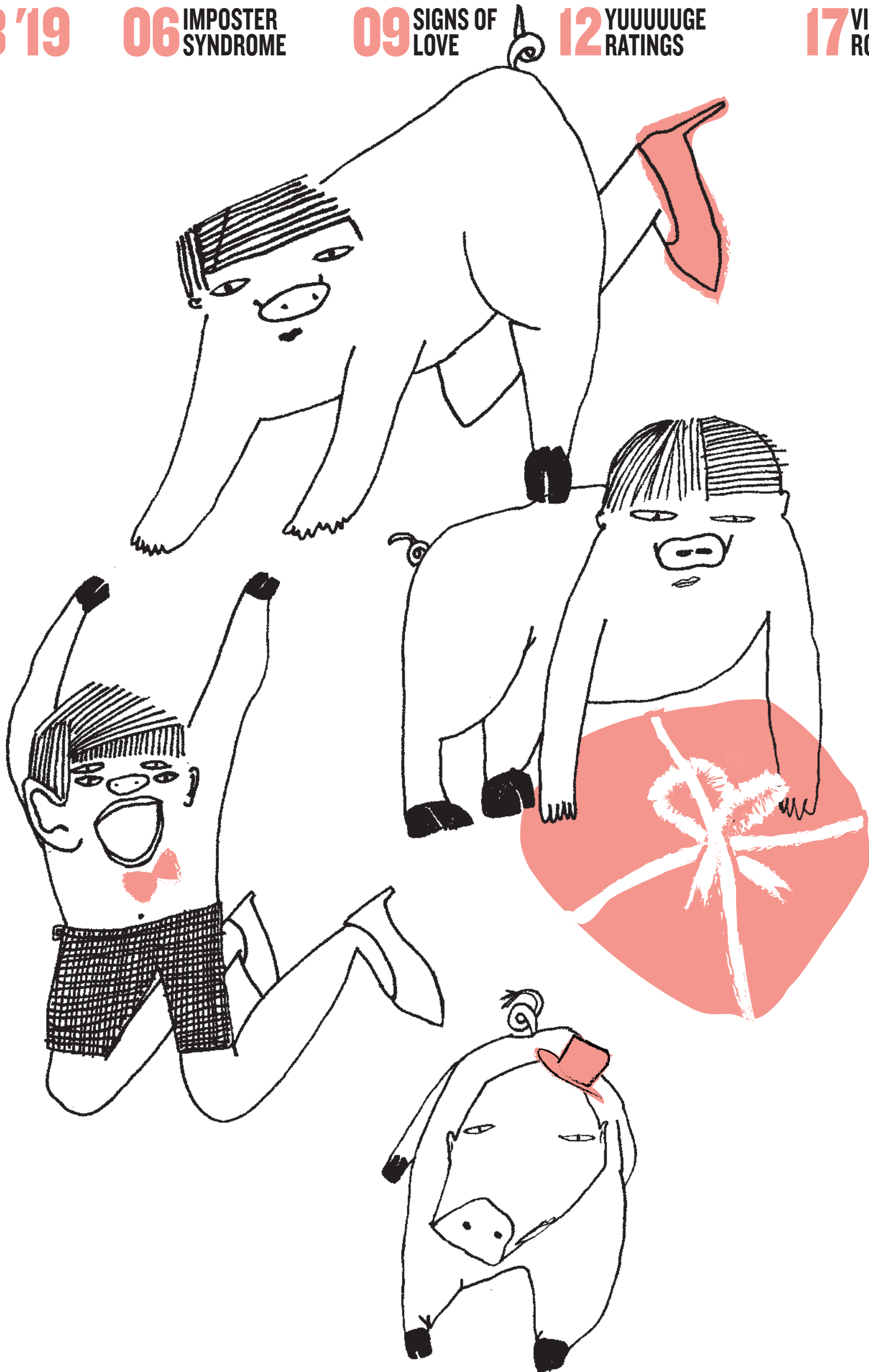
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Thank you for your dedication, energy, creativity, and
leadership. We look forward to continued collaborations.

STUDY TRIPS | SUMMER 2019

Info sessions are happening now.
See saic.edu/studyabroad for info session schedule.

Scholarship deadline: February 13
See saic.edu/life-at-saic/study-abroad/scholarships for details.

American High Plains:
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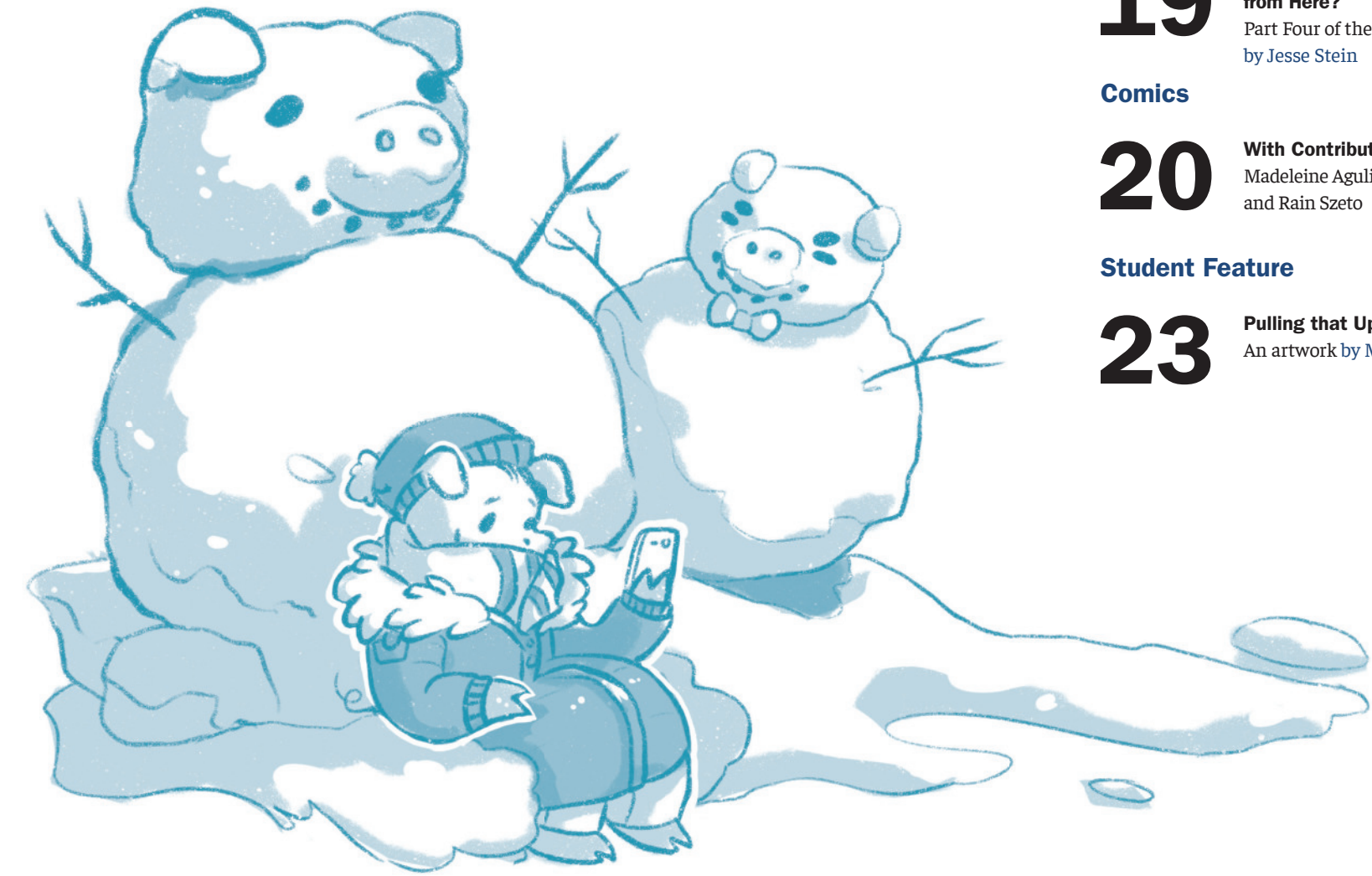
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The environment of an art school, particularly one like the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), can be a haven for non-binary people like myself. After spending years struggling with conservative rules in high school, gender-neutral bathrooms and professors mentioning pronouns felt borderline magical. I didn't have to explain they/them pronouns to everyone in the room. I didn't have to try to duck in and out of restrooms unseen. I could just exist.

SAIC is certainly far ahead of the vast majority of spaces in the world in terms of gender-inclusivity. However, being ahead of the curve does not mean there is not more room for growth. I realized this while running from floor to floor during a critique, looking for the nearest empty gender-neutral bathroom before my bladder gave up on me.

Currently, I am aware of four things that must be done in order to make SAIC a truly hospitable place for gender non-conforming people:

Update gender-neutral bathrooms across campus so there are several options in every building.

I am sick of having to use the wrong restroom. I'll pee on the floor next time I have to wait for a gender-neutral bathroom. Consider that a warning.

The bathrooms in the Columbus Drive building have been updated, which is incredible. Multi-stall gender-neutral bathrooms are the future, frankly. But I, along with other non-binary people, am not always in Columbus. The 10th-floor restrooms in the Sharp Building were converted into a gender-neutral space. This means there are gender-neutral bathrooms on one third of the floors in Sharp, not nearly enough. There is no news being given to students about what other changes might be made. Having four single-stall gender-neutral bathrooms is not enough per building, especially when students and workers have to run from floor to floor, missing class or school, because the bathrooms are seemingly always full. This happens when there are only two available toilets in a building.

Converting one gendered bathroom per floor in MacLean and Sharp would make all the difference, alternating male and female so there would be an appropriate restroom for everyone just a floor away. But anyone could use the gender-neutral bathrooms that would then be present on every floor.

Create a standardized protocol to ensure that pronouns are recognized and used correctly in classes and workplaces.

Typically, professors are pretty good about including preferred pronouns in introductions at SAIC. But I have been in classes with drastically different people on the first week of class and after the add/drop period. Reminding professors to ask for pronouns at the beginning of class and after the



I'll pee on the floor next time I have to wait for a gender neutral bathroom. Consider that a warning.

add/drop period would fix the problem. Providing pronoun pins as a visual reminder in on-campus workplaces would keep people from being misgendered.

Once again, SAIC is generally considerate of asking about and using the correct pronouns. But even the little slips that happen could — and should — be avoided.

Respect gender indicators and current names (rather than deadnames) across campus.

A deadname is the birth name of a transgender person who has changed their name, and it should absolutely not be used or acknowledged, unless by the trans person themself. Using "dead" rather than "birth" to refer to the name buries it in history, and instead conjures up an image of a past-spirit. This illustrates the mistake and the harm done in this type of misgendering.

I am relatively lucky because I never had to deal with changing my name on legal identification and forms; I registered with the name I use. Yet, despite having my name listed correctly in the files that I have been made aware of, I am receiving emails addressed to my deadname. This is jarring, painful, and completely avoidable. It is the only place I have to deal with this, which feels absurd. This school is good about gender in every other way. Why hasn't this been dealt with already?

Streamline and make accessible the processes to update names and gender indicators within the school's records.

People are constantly in flux. Half of what makes SAIC so progressive and inclusive is that a huge number of the students identify outside of the gender binary. This environment allows a lot of students to explore their identities and potentially realize that they are not cis-gender. This is great, but people need to be able to adjust their records immediately and easily to reflect that.

It is possible that I am just completely clueless, but I have no idea how to go about fixing my information in SAIC's records. I don't know who to email to figure out how to fix things. I don't know who to email to figure out who to email to get it fixed. Making the process user-friendly would ensure that students do not have to deal with completely unnecessary and painful circumstances on campus.

In order for non-binary people to truly be comfortable on campus, all of these steps must be followed. Getting misgendered even once is too much. While it is impossible to control every person and what they say, fostering a safe and inclusive environment will lead to something better. As our society and gender identities evolve, other issues will likely arise, and there may be more action that needs taking. But if all of this is done, I will at least be able to stop complaining.

all for **one**, for all
one

What SAIC can do for its non-binary students
by **Line Kuzniar**

Illustration by Katie Wittenberg

Line Kuzniar (BFA 2021) is a self-described fool and frog enthusiast. Their name rhymes with fine.

Today’s Lesson: Social Justice

Longtime activist Ruth Needleman sets her sights on ICE

by Georgia Hampton

“I call it *The FBI intercept*,” says Ruth Needleman, laughing. I had attributed our previous phone call’s abrupt ending to poor cell service, but Ruth has other ideas. Still laughing, she adds, “I’m pretty sure all my phones are surveilled.”

Ruth Needleman, a Lecturer of Liberal Arts at School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), describes herself as “an old fogie who hates injustice.” The course she teaches each spring semester, “Social Movements from a Global Perspective,” explores the history and growth of social movements as well as the many elements that get in their way. She’s an expert on these themes because she has lived them. She tells me casually how she’s been an activist for over 50 years, during which time she’s worked alongside César Chavez and the government of Salvador Allende. “I’ve been around the block a few times,” she says, “and I still hate injustice!”

Currently, Ruth and the regional coalition she co-organizes, Northwest Indiana (NWI) Resistance, are focusing on immigrant deportations at the Gary/Chicago International Airport. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has deported over 12,000 immigrants out of the Gary airport since 2013. In reference to this issue, Ruth says, “I think people have to make it a constitutional necessity to not let this shit go on.”

In September, in an effort to voice their anger, NWI Resistance bought January-March rights to a billboard on the way to the Gary airport that now reads “STOP GARY AIRPORT DEPORTATIONS! FAMILIES BELONG TOGETHER!” According to Ruth, the billboard has already gotten quite a bit of attention. “I posted it and someone commented, ‘I’m gonna raise the money to buy that billboard, bitch!’” she says, laughing.

Ruth Needleman is 74 years old with wispy blonde hair and wire-rimmed glasses. She’s short — shorter than me, and

I’m 5’3”. At first glance, she could be anyone’s grandmother, any woman on the subway. She could belong to any political group. But the moment she speaks, sparks shoot from her mouth and her eyes. She is passionate; she is furious.

“I didn’t always know why I hated injustice as much as I do,” she says, adding that over time she’s identified a multitude of reasons.

“I’m particularly angry at my family,” she says. “They didn’t like me, they rejected me, they made me feel worthless.” She says fighting for social justice was how she channeled her anger into something productive. “I was always better at fighting for other people than myself, but that’s okay,” Ruth tells F. “I’ve gotten so much strength and power from seeing people realize that they were something more than what they thought.”

NWI Resistance meets often, and Ruth invited me to their January 12 meeting. “You’ll be well-fed!” she had assured me, adding that the meeting was being catered by Mexico Lindo, a Hammond, Ind., restaurant whose owner and employees had been detained by ICE until recently.

By the time I arrived, around 20 people of varying races and ages were already seated. There were a handful of people in their twenties — maybe younger — alongside men and women well into their seventies. One man who introduced himself as Pastor Charlie Strietelmeier brought his dog, a delightfully round dachshund named Longfellow.

Even those who trickled in from the snow well after the meeting began received warm welcomes. Latecomers were ushered in and met with a whispered, “Hey! Nice to see you! Come sit here!”

When I ask Ruth about the surprising sense of camaraderie among the attendees, she offers me a simple explanation: “When you meet together at the airport in the

freezing cold or the pouring rain, surrounded by SWAT teams, local police, and county sheriffs, you bond.” She laughs.

Ruth began the meeting by asking everyone to introduce themselves and say the one thing they were angriest about. Some people referred to larger issues like racism, others mentioned more specific issues. Two chose not to answer. While particulars varied, the overriding sentiment was the same: Things are terrible, but if we don’t fight to change it, no one will. Each comment was met with hums of agreement or silent nodding.

“You have to know what gets someone angry, what makes them laugh, what they really care about. That’s the entryway for organizing.”

Ruth tells me that asking questions like that is a big part of fostering strength in an activist organization. “You have to build relationships with people, and that means you can’t just lecture, or give people things to do,” she says. “You have to know what gets someone angry, what makes them laugh, what they really care about. That’s the entryway for organizing.”

When asked about how the organization stays optimistic while fighting against obstacles as enormous as deportation, Ruth quickly says she has no choice. “Hopelessness is paralysis and inaction,” she says. “If you don’t think what you do will make a difference, you won’t do anything. If you believe that what you do will make a difference, you will work harder.”



Ruth Needleman tells NWI Resistance about the man who had threatened to buy the billboard as an act of retaliation. “I’m going to buy that billboard, bitch!” Ruth reads aloud. The news is met with cheers and laughter. Photography by Georgia Hampton

Georgia Hampton (MANAJ 2020) is the News Editor at F Newsmagazine. You can listen to her on The Peach Pit through SAIC’s Free Radio. She can’t find her phone, can you call it?



Shoe Corner

A daughter takes her mother to the Art Institute of Chicago for the first time

by **J. Bluett**

In the armpit of Indiana where I grew up, the closest thing to a cultural experience takes place at the intersection of 109th and Calumet. Aptly named “Shoe Corner,” this four-way stop in Hanover Township is precisely that — a place where people throw old, unwanted shoes out their car window. Sometimes the pile of shoes gets so large you have to intentionally accelerate over it, dozens and dozens of beat-up Nike knockoffs and \$1 Old Navy flip-flops throttling the muffler of your ‘95 Corolla. Sometimes a “no dumping” sign shows up. Just as quickly as it appears, the sign vanishes and shoes continue to pile up. When the pile gets too high, the highway department comes to clear it all away. But the shoes always return.

My people love Shoe Corner. We used to take the long way home to ogle and peruse the selection. One time my friend even found a perfectly good pair of New Balance running shoes in her size. Nobody minded when she hopped out to claim them, brushing the dust off.

When I moved from Indiana to Chicago for college, I would penny-pinch to go to the orchestra, the opera, the Art Institute. I tried to experience as many new things as possible, absorbing sights, sounds, and smells like a sponge. The first time I tried sushi I mentioned it in passing on a phone call with my mom. Her response, “Sushi? Who are you?” She sounded hurt. “I just don’t get it.” It’s as if the further away I got from food deserts, poverty, and Shoe Corner, the further I got from my mother.

She doesn't visit me in Chicago often, the expressway makes her nervous, but this fall we decided to spend a day at the Art Institute of Chicago, a place she'd never been to before. Wandering through the museum, she didn't say much but when she did, it was, "I don't get it." I couldn't squash the feeling of desperation in my gut. I just wanted her to like something, anything.

Next we visited the Thorne Miniature Rooms, a collection of little itty-bitty worlds painstakingly constructed on a scale of one inch to one foot. Peering inside the glass display, you can peek into the world of European and American furnishings from the 16th century to 1940. Uninhabited English dining rooms, California hallways, New York parlors, and Pennsylvanian kitchens are all perfectly furnished with oriental rugs, chaise lounges, and crown molding. I watched my mom spend several minutes with each miniature room, and when she completed the rounds, she went back to look at them once more. I watched her transfixed by these displays, but that feeling of desperation lingered.

Throughout my childhood I don't remember ever going to a museum with my family, because institutions were designed to make you feel poor and stupid. I at least knew the former to be true. I remember when the plumbing in our house broke we would flush the toilet with buckets of water from the kitchen sink. A single mother of three, my mom tried to figure out how to fix it herself. Plumbers are expensive.

Instead, she spent scrimped-together savings for my weekly flute lessons and gas to drive me back and forth to my teacher's home. When we couldn't afford it anymore, my teacher let me come on a "scholarship" and sometimes he'd "forget" to collect the reduced payment. I have always felt an immense gratitude for the kind and generous people I've met along the way, the ones who boosted me up the ladder to higher education.

Still, a veil of guilt follows me. I am no longer an 11-year-old with starry-eyed dreams of canonical fame and a six-figure salary with the Berlin Philharmonic. I am a young adult with bills, student loans, three part-time jobs, and a more realistic vision of the hand I was dealt. I have come to the end of the first semester of my graduate degree at one of the top art schools in the country and I'm still grappling with the feeling that I don't actually belong here, that these experiences aren't meant for people like me. Everything I learn, the opportunities I receive, it all feels like kicking my mother in the ribs.

On a recent visit home, I discovered her toilet wouldn't flush again. This time it's a simple fix, all it needed was a new valve and chain. When my coworker asks how school is going, I confide in her that I often feel like an imposter. That any moment someone will realize who I am and tell me to

go home. It's not too late for me to learn a trade — plumbing makes good money.

When I'm back in Chicago I return to the Art Institute alone searching for the reason why my mother connected with these little rooms. Maybe she was imagining herself in dozens of different lives. Lives where she never had to flush the toilet with buckets of water. Lives where she could see a doctor for that weird pain in her stomach (my mother hasn't had health insurance in years). Maybe she was simply enjoying the care and skill it took to craft these miniatures. I would ask her, but I'm afraid she'll tell me she actually didn't like them all, that they were dumb. Or worse, I'm afraid that she'll say, "I didn't get it."

During my next shift at work my coworker and I talk politics instead of talking about the Art Institute, school, or my mother. I tell her about the time I tried to vote by absentee ballot in the 2016 Election, but it got "lost in the mail." Ultimately I traveled back to Indiana on a school night to cast a provisional ballot

in person. I arrived at my polling location at 6 a.m. and stood in line with a slew of middle aged white men in red MAGA hats. I explained my situation to the very elderly poll worker and requested a provisional ballot. After she found the paperwork she asked me to read the instructions to her. She told me she never learned how to read.

Late one evening I finally muster up the courage to text my mother about our trip to the Art Institute. I ask if she remembers the Thorne Miniature Rooms.

She replies, "Yes." I ask if she liked them. She says, "Sure."

I can feel perspiration pooling in my armpits. I try to sit with this discomfort. I struggle to understand why this matters so

much to me anyway.

I push a little harder and ask if she has a favorite piece from our visit. She sends me a photo that she saved on her phone and, rather than seeing a snapshot of a miniature Shaker Living Room or 19th-century English Rotunda, I see a photo of Ivan Albright's "That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do (The Door)," a grotesque, ultra-realistic, 8-foot-tall painting of a decrepit door adorned with a funeral wreath.

I don't remember seeing this work during our visit together and I certainly don't remember her ever mentioning it. A little confused, I ask her why this is her favorite.

She replies, "Idk."

I missed the moment my mom saw the Albright, snapping a photo to put in her pocket and take back home to Indiana. In my own desperation I had inadvertently cast a projection of the poor and unsophisticated onto my own mother, underestimating her ability to appreciate art, no expensive degree required.

I text her, "I thought the Miniature Rooms would have been your favorite." She reads my message but doesn't respond.



J. Bluett is a writer and graduate student.

The Walmart House of Worship



Rubber Pencil Devil installation view, Carnegie Museum of Art, 2018 Photograph courtesy of Alex Da Corte

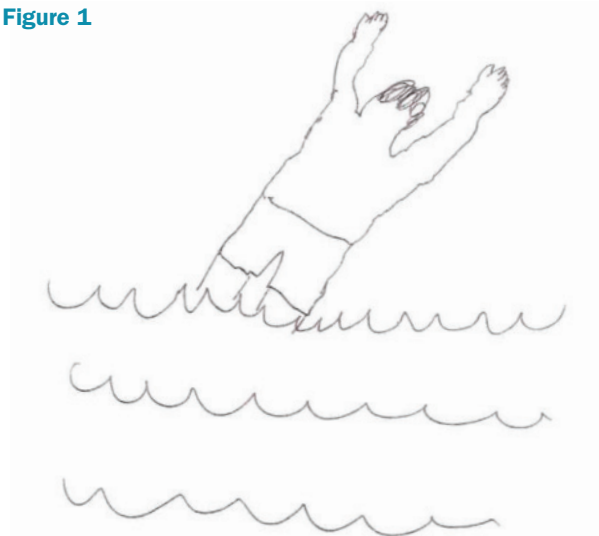
Alex Da Corte on the worst art he’s ever made, his parents, and animism

by Leah Gallant

There is an unsettling animism to the work of Philadelphia-based artist Alex Da Corte. In his gem-hued, neon-lit installations, his bizarre updates on everyday objects — a giant Kleenex box, an enormous black witch hat — become like silent characters on a stage. In “Easternsports,” the far-ranging film by Da Corte and collaborators Jayson Musson and Dev Hynes that reads like Oskar Schlemmer’s “Triadic Ballet” remade with dollar store props, the actors’ movements seem propelled by the set itself. Da Corte’s work recalls the narratives where, “Toy Story”-like, things come alive at night. In his American-flavored animism, Walmart is a house of worship, and plastic is immortalized on its styrofoam altars. During his December visit to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) as a guest critic, I spoke with Da Corte about the darkness of suburbia, that year he spent dressed as Michael Myers, and the worst art he’s ever made.

Leah Gallant: If you had free license to use the Rocky statue by the front steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in an installation, what would you do with it?
Alex Da Corte: This is the Rocky statue in the Delaware River. [Figure 1]

LG: Are there particular things about Philadelphia that influence your work?

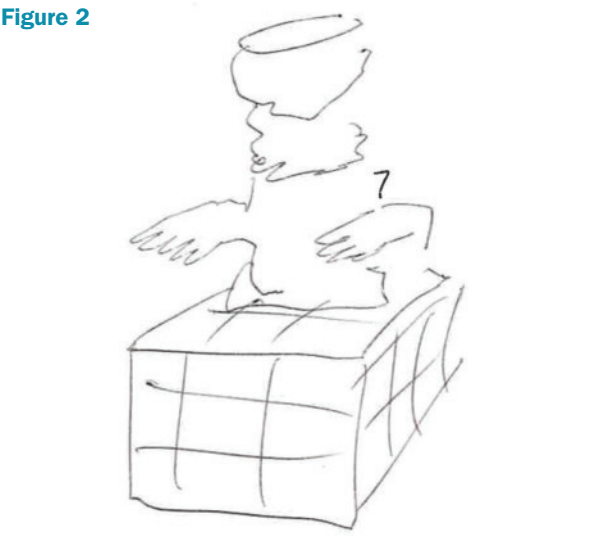


Images courtesy of Alex Da Corte

ADC: Philadelphia has a sort of middle-child syndrome. It’s a large city with many interesting things about it, but it’s also close to other cities that are much bigger, which allows it to exist under the radar. There’s a lot of freedom in that.

LG: Your work conveys a distinctive feeling of the suburban. In particular, it has a certain in-betweenness, of being neither urban nor rural. It also feels simultaneously like a front and back stage. How do these liminal qualities relate to the references to hell in your titles (“Rubber Pencil Devil,” “A Season in He’ll,” “Devil Town,” “A Night in Hell”)? What links these banal objects and environments to a conception of evil?
ADC: I’m interested in the idea of “keeping up with the Joneses” — the idea that a well-kept lawn, a nice fence, or a manicured home is enough to persevere. It’s the belief in the importance of maintaining the mask of sanity or well-being or societal correctness, but the appearance is only on the surface. I found through my own experiences in the suburbs that appearances can be deceiving. Things fall apart behind a well-maintained lawn. The neighbors actively maintain a happy mask but suffer in the backyard. I hope to deconstruct that mask. It’s like the duality of the American Dream. But the American dream is a delusion, it’s a very problematic idea.

LG: While doing your MFA at Yale, you were making stand-alone sculptures with an Isa Genzken-Jessica Stockholder vibe. After graduating, you lived at home with your parents in New Jersey, where you did a durational performance (or just life activity?) piece in which you wore a Michael Myers mask and observed your family members from the bushes outside the house for a year. Both the sculpture and the performances are very different from the clean lines and



bright colors of your current work. Was there a particular piece that you consider a turning point in your practice?
ADC: A lot of it was just related to where I was in the world. When I was living with my parents, I didn’t have a studio, so I was just trying to make work. As an artist, you always have to make work, and to figure out what that work is. So my work just became my waking life. It would be hard for me to go into complete costume again now and live as Michael Myers for a year when my daily life calls for other things, like being a teacher. And I work that way — I’m very tied to responding to my surroundings. I started making work that was stark and theatrical or in the form of an installation in part due to my long admiration for theater, tableau, shop displays, and opera. But it was also about resisting the market. I didn’t want to make a singular sculpture that would have a price tag. I was trying to extend the lines of my canvas or my pedestal to be so large or immeasurable that you couldn’t access the work in the same way that you couldn’t access a dream or a performance because it was there and gone, it was outside of the market.

LG: What is the worst artwork you’ve ever made?
ADC: I’ve made so many bad artworks it’s hard to choose. I was making all this stuff that was too busy. Really busy. Busier than everything else I make. [Figure 2]

LG: If you were to select one of your pieces to be discovered by an archaeologist 666 years from now, which would it be? In what state would it be found?
ADC: I want my last artwork to be me, buried in my coffin and dressed as Bela Lugosi from the movie “Dracula.” I’d want to be exhumed looking real sharp. [Figure 3]



Leah Gallant (NAJ 2020) is Arts Editor at F Newsmagazine. Like Brad Pitt, she is mostly made of water.

An astrological assessment of the month of love
by **Neha Bhat**

Loving Underwater



Love is ethereal, messy, intense, and all-encompassing. Love is art: part demon, part goddess. February is here. It may rush past our school this semester. We may or may not realize it, but each of us will yearn for pleasure and romance. Although it is the month of the water bearer (Aquarius, an air sign), many of the outer planets are in water signs. The water signs correspond to the water in our bodies: tears, sweat, blood — the physical manifestations of passion, compassion, pain and joy. Water is the element that connects us to our inner worlds.

Aries

In her December 2017 Mask Magazine horoscopes, astrologer Corina Dross wrote, “Because you don’t live in the depths of the oceans, you are an exception.” You are fire-breath and dragon wings, Aries, soaring into the skies. You rile people up; you sweep them off their feet. Ashes are your footsteps and you’re proud of that. But this month is a bit different. You can’t ignore the ocean inside of you. With the planet of eccentric changes (Uranus) leaving your side, you no longer have it in you to compromise with instability. Feel that urge to want grounding. Accept that you may meet someone who gives you reason to find home. It is bound to pay off.

Taurus

The only constant in life is change. You love your cement-like boundaries, Taurus. The more concrete love is, the better it is for you. But 2019 is different. The currents are pulling you toward the sea. You’re going to have to learn swiftly that love isn’t linear, and codependency doesn’t bode well. Allow the water to flow through those walls you build. Uranus is yours for another few chunks of time. Let go a bit. Let Cupid do their thing and meet someone a bit out-of-the-box. If you’re with a lover already, walk a new path consciously. Uranus likes crisis, so don’t let her get ahead of you.

Gemini

Water and air are interconnected elements. The way rain evaporates, leaving little traces of itself, resembles how you relate to your feelings as an air sign — the moment you try to catch them, they grow elusive. You can be so in your head. This month is about seeking joy in your closest relationships, rather than running after transient ones. The universe wants to help, sending messengers of rain when you least expect them. Something is being reborn. Try to remember that connection is a two-way street. You don’t have to chase anymore. Nature is blessing you right now.

Cancer

To you, emotions are like poetry, like music. One of the most feeling-oriented water signs, Cancers relate to feelings deeply, sometimes preferring to submerge themselves, not eager to resurface. This month, Saturn (the planet of responsibility) in Capricorn is your partnership sector ruler, and is bringing some mature, logically oriented folks into your life. Allow yourself to receive care. Expect big shifts in your love life. If you’re single, meeting people is crucial right now. If partnered, continue to manifest abundance by connecting to your higher self.

Leo

Yours is a crowded ocean this month, full of tangled seaweed, coral reefs, and possibly some toxic plastic polluting the seascape. Jupiter (the planet of abundance) is in focus for you, when it comes to romance. Expect a plethora of options for casual intimacies. Don’t expect your heart to be pulled into any big commitments. Date multiple people if you have the time, but keep coming back to the surface for air. Last year, you were forced to spend lots of time under the ocean; this year, the universe is steering you towards sunlight. Don’t push for anything deeper — enjoy the romantic break!

Virgo

You are earth itself. You are the foundation upon which water is able to flow. But have you thought about who provides care to the bottoms of structures? Try imagining yourself standing tall, instead of casting yourself in a supporting role. When wise mountains open their mouths, streams of fresh, life-giving liquids flow. Virgo, you out of all the signs have magic written in your charts this month. Saturn is sitting in its home sign of Capricorn, your partner Earth sign. Neptune, planet of illusion and fantasy, is in beautiful geometry with your house of partnerships. Expect a combination of stability and eccentricity in someone that lands on your doorstep, as long as you can discern between joyous illusion and manipulative deception. Stay in the shallow until you can trust them. Then, swim on!

Libra

If others are thinking up how best to cross turbulent water, you’re the one thinking about who else is crossing with you. Libras like connection and shared goals but struggle with putting themselves first. Life has been asking you to focus on yourself first for a while now. Uranus is weeding out your eighth house of sex and sexuality. You may want to be a relationship anarchist this month. Whatever it is, remember that all water bodies need movement to clear out dead weeds. Without looking into the past, you won’t move very far.

Scorpio

Still waters run deep. You’re suspicious of seas that are too quiet. Neptune rules Pisces, and Pisces symbolizes water-bodies all over the Earth. Neptune is truly being a magical mermaid in your area of love and intimacy this month. Expect people who are more fantasy-oriented and less adept at setting boundaries to be attracted to you. You get a major boost in self-confidence this month with Saturn gifting you a taste of inner stability, but be careful. You deserve magic, but you also deserve structure and joy in the mundane. Journal about the words “safety” and “love.” Whatever emerges at this time is important to tune into.

Sagittarius

No more underwater adventures for a while for you, my dear fire sign! Saturn leaving your sign has meant a reduced burden, so abundant and unconditional Jupiterian love is at your doorstep. This very well could mean a rebirth of the self. Have you done enough work to enjoy the present and the future, without getting stuck in the currents of the past? Are you ready to seek new adventures for a fresh 28-year cycle? Without inner work, every arrow you release outwards in your traditional style may just fly back towards you. Enjoy the gifts and continue your own healing. True balance awaits you.

Capricorn

Oh, wise old captain of the sea, there’s a majestic ship of change at sail in your inner world. Saturn entered your sign last year and continues this year, in full focus this month. You are functioning at your very best in all facets of life. Your boundaries are up and alive. But life has different plans. Water always manages to flow through the cracks. This month, ensure that your seriousness is not keeping you imprisoned. Expect some interesting prospects to knock at your doors. They will want to open the floodgates inside you. It is time to navigate the seas a bit differently.

Aquarius

Happy birthday season, Aquarius! Gone are the days when you expected sudden ends or beginnings to romances. After the January 21st lunar eclipse, whatever debris accumulated will settle organically. Now, your waters are abundant and light. With no large planetary shifts in your sign, expect to be more in control of your love life. Spend time near the water. You are special and you help raise everyone else’s consciousnesses, even if you feel misunderstood. Continue to expect more for yourself. The universe wants to gift you her romantic joys, too.

Pisces

You love to immerse yourself in the waves around you, floating slightly upwards towards the sun or submerging yourself in the depths of feelings. This makes you difficult to understand. This month, you will find yourself seeking connections with those on a similar wavelength. Don’t invest in people who are emotionally unavailable. Find energies that have good boundaries, rather than always being the savior in your romances. Look in your friend-circle. Jupiter is giving you something to look forward to there.

A Year With: Babka

Babka and baking and finding your place

by **Casey Carsel**

My first slice of babka was in New York. I was visiting my mother for Thanksgiving and had spent the day with a friend who was also from New Zealand and had also found herself in this strange country. We wandered around Central Park, saw nothing more than the otters of the zoo because we wouldn't purchase a ticket, and meandered across to the Jewish Museum. Starving but unwilling to buy a full meal, I set my sights on a thick cut of chocolate marbled goodness wrapped in plastic on the deli counter. We walked back to the park and I ate while my friend smoked and drank coffee. It was home away from home and also not home.

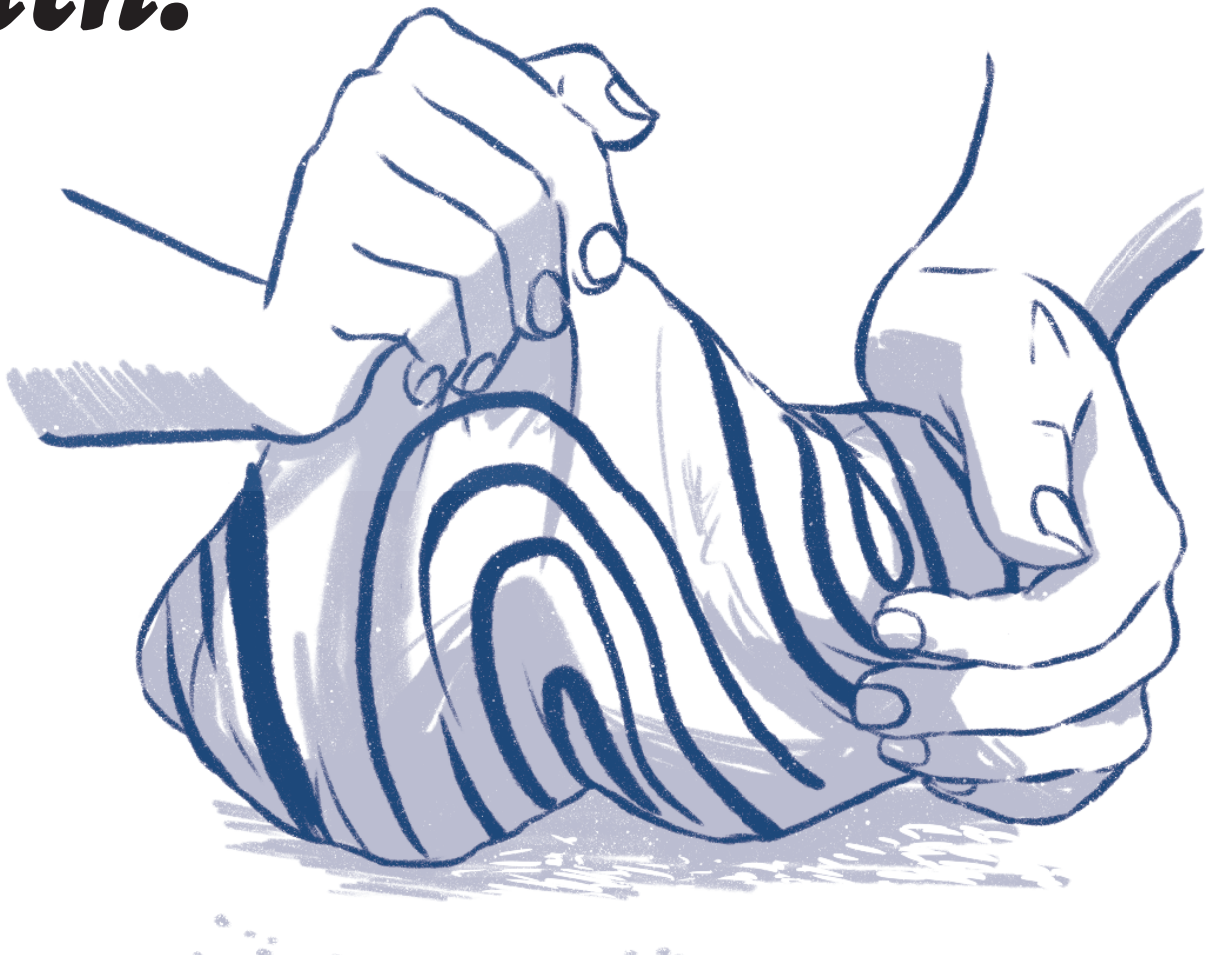
Babka is a sweet bread that can be found in many Eastern European cultures. Ashkenazi Jewish babka is comprised of a yeast dough made mostly of egg and butter, just barely held together with flour, enclosing either a chocolate or cinnamon-based filling, often with a chocolate streusel crumb and a sugar syrup glaze. It is a decadent thing and, in my humble opinion, one of the best Jewish desserts in the land. Interestingly, from the same region, babka is also the name of the bread served on Easter within Eastern Europe's Catholic community.

A few months later, craving the loaf once more and unsure of where to get it in Chicago (please send suggestions to editors@newsweek.com), it seemed the only solution rested in my own two hands.

I cooked my first loaf of babka during the winter break between my first and second semesters of graduate school. I had neglected to make plans for the holiday season — not being one to celebrate Christmas — and had in any case fallen ill, barely leaving my bed between December 23 and January 2. My flatmates had returned to their respective families for the season. I was happy to cough up phlegm in peace, but I missed home.

I missed how everything in New Zealand shuts down for the month surrounding Christmas and New Year's, missed wandering around Auckland on Christmas Eve in the summer weather and feeling like the only person in the world. This year, alternating between sleeping and watching "Better Call Saul," I was the only person in the world merely by virtue of a becoming a shut-in.

As the fog began to lift, to prove my good health and warm my heart with my last memory of what felt like some version of home in this strange country, I attempted to engage with the time-consuming recipe that is babka.



I used The New York Times' recipe because I trust The New York Times cooking page too much. The recipe was 14 steps spread across two days and was, in my opinion, simultaneously too much and not enough.

In summary, you make the dough, let it rise and chill, melt the filling ingredients together, mix the streusel, and heat the sugar-syrup glaze. Roll the dough out into discs, spread the filling across the surface, and roll the discs up tightly. Cut the discs in half length-wise and wrap them together again in a tight helix formation. Place in a loaf pan and let rise again. Sprinkle with streusel and bake for about an hour if

Babka is the yardstick with which I measure the shit-show roller-coaster that is life.

your oven is a bit weak like ours. Remove from the oven, poke with holes, and pour the sugar syrup on top.

The recipe was a learning experience. It was also probably to date the most disappointing babka I have ever tasted. Maybe I was too sick; maybe I was too sad; or maybe the New York Times doesn't have all the answers. I gave a good amount of the batch away and took the rest with me on my funded research trip to the Jewish American Archives in Cincinnati. In yet another strange new place, I stored it in the fridge of my Airbnb and noshed on it until it was no more. The name of the loaf translates to "little grandmother," and

— despite room for improvement in the execution — it was a touching accompaniment to a trip in which I was doing my best to trace my family's history through the few writings my great-grandfather had left behind.

My latest attempt at a babka recipe followed a stressful summer full of illness and death within my family. I needed comfort food, and I needed to prove to myself that I was still in control of all my faculties. This time, I looked to Pretty. Simple. Sweet. for my recipe and found the overall flavors better, but accidentally left it raw in the middle. It felt about right.

Shortly after, I flew to New York to visit my father. In a hospital bed on Staten Island, he was slowly losing his words while dying of brain cancer. Chewing through a complex palette of emotions, I had one day set aside to digest in the peace and quiet of the city. I spent that day at the Russ and Daughters deli — the original downtown location.

At the deli, I bought three loaves of babka — one for my Staten Island family and two for friends back in Chicago. That entire weekend I maintained an airtight lid on my emotions; the alternative would have been a complete meltdown. I suppose that was why I found myself searching out the comfort of babka but rejected its direct consumption, instead only procuring it for others. My father's own stomach had shrunk to a toddler's diet, but my step-mother placed the loaf in their study next to the temporary bed in which he spent most of his days, as if that would pique his interest away from death. That loaf, or maybe modern medicine, must have worked because he kept going for a while.

The last babka I had was a Trader Joe's babka someone brought to my father's shiva. Before my step-mother woke up on the second day, I ate a slice in the living room by myself, surrounded by empty chairs that would soon be filled with guests singing his praises. The previous day, a friend of my father's had told me the death of a parent is a pivotal moment. I cannot yet comprehend what that means for me. But a familiar food allows all kinds of memories to rush back in at once, and with them perhaps the ability to move towards the future.



Mir Veln Zey Iberlebn

A discussion of anti-Semitism after the Tree of Life shooting
by **Casey Carsel**

The shooting of 11 Jews in Pittsburgh at the Tree of Life synagogue on October 27 last year was the largest mass murder targeting Jewish people in United States history. While the landscape of anti-Semitism has taken various forms in the country over time — including the lynching of Leo Frank, Henry Ford’s anti-Semitic newspaper the Dearborn Independent, and white supremacy groups such as the Ku Klux Klan — the Tree of Life shooting has sparked conversation about what it looks like now. F Newsmagazine talked with local Jewish organizations as well as members of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) community about anti-Semitism in America today.

Landscape of anti-Semitism in Trump’s America

“[Anti-Semitism] has always existed the way Jews have always been the scapegoat for every nation’s downfall,” local Jewish activist Rivka Yeker told F Newsmagazine. “There is anti-Semitism on the left, on the right, and everywhere else, but it shows different faces, some more subtle than others.”

The shooter, Robert Bowers, targeted Tree of Life Synagogue not only because it was a Jewish congregation, but also for its work with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). This detail speaks to a larger anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that designates the Jewish people as manipulators and puppet-masters of other minorities. “To rail against blacks and Hispanics without mentioning Jews is like complaining about the symptoms and not the disease,” neo-Nazi leader Victor Gerhard wrote in 2003.

These sentiments are echoed in a 1966 Playboy interview with George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party: “They think they’re ‘the chosen people’ — chosen to rule the world. But the only world they could rule would be a world of inferior beings. And as long as the white man is pure, they cannot succeed. But when the white man permits himself to be mixed with black men, then the Jews can master him.”

Associate Professor Jan Tichy emphasised the intersectionality of anti-Semitism and other forms of hate. “If there is racism and segregation as there is in Chicago and the rest of the country, there is also xenophobia and anti-Semitism,”

he told F News. “It is here, like it has been everywhere always. But with the current administration fueling and actively supporting racism, I have no doubt we are seeing a rise of all sorts of hatreds.”

Tzedek Chicago co-chair Susan Klonsky echoes Tichy’s sentiments, saying the actions of the current presidential administration has made anti-Semitism “polite and socially acceptable.”

“Trump’s rolling back of various acts that protect civil rights is his attempt at a groundswell that says ‘nobody has to do anything they don’t want to do, including treating people with respect and dignity;” Klonsky says. “He’s created this atmosphere in which the worst elements — the most misogynistic, the most anti-Semitic, the most racist — look to him for the ‘okay’ to do whatever it is that they want to do.”

IfNotNow Chicago — a local organization dedicated to ending American Jewish support of the Israeli occupation — hosted a December 2018 workshop that discussed the systems under which anti-Semitism thrives.

According to the flowchart presented during the workshop, it functions through a series of steps. First, Jews are isolated, particularly from other marginalized groups, and given comparative upwards mobility. Then, those in power

Anti-Semitism often designates the Jewish people as the puppet-masters of other minorities.

encourage other marginalized groups to focus their anger on Jews as the most immediate oppressors to be identified, turning Jews into scapegoats. In search of safety, Jews may then cooperate with the ruling class or ruling ideology — in the United States, white supremacy — entering into further isolation from groups they should be allies with and starting the cycle over again.

According to IfNotNow Chicago, Jews and allies have a choice to participate in and therefore perpetuate this cycle, or to break it by, for example, choosing not to cooperate with the ruling class. IfNotNow devised this seminar to open discussions in relation to the Pittsburgh shooting around the ways in which we may either perpetuate conditions anti-Semitism thrives in or stop them in their tracks.

The vigils

In the aftermath of the Tree of Life shooting, many Jewish people throughout Chicago and the country gathered for dinners and Shabbats, while many Jewish and interfaith vigils were held.

“I took time to myself and spent time with other Jews,” said Rivka Yeker. “I had to work the days it happened, and felt crushed those few days. When gathering with the other Jews, we talked about the ways it made us feel scared, nervous, sad, and angry.”

Others, such as Tichy, chose not to attend any organized gatherings. “Living in Jerusalem during the Second Intifada left its own scars and sensitivities,” he tells F Newsmagazine.

Susan Klonsky says that she participated in an interfaith vigil that occurred less than 24 hours after the shooting occurred. “It was almost entirely publicised on social media by young people from different activist groups who said, ‘We have to do something, let’s do something quickly so this doesn’t go for weeks unremarked.’”

Though Klonsky accepted describing the vigils and other gatherings in the aftermath of the shooting as “cathartic,” she told F News, “It’s too soon to talk about healing.”

“People need a place to express grief and righteous anger and to try and really awaken the surrounding community that is not necessarily paying attention,” Klonsky said. “I think some people may have expected too much from attending an event. It’s like saying ‘healing from the Shoah.’ Is that really possible? To an extent. But you don’t forget, and you are hypervigilant for the rest of your life. People are marked by events like that, generation after generation.”

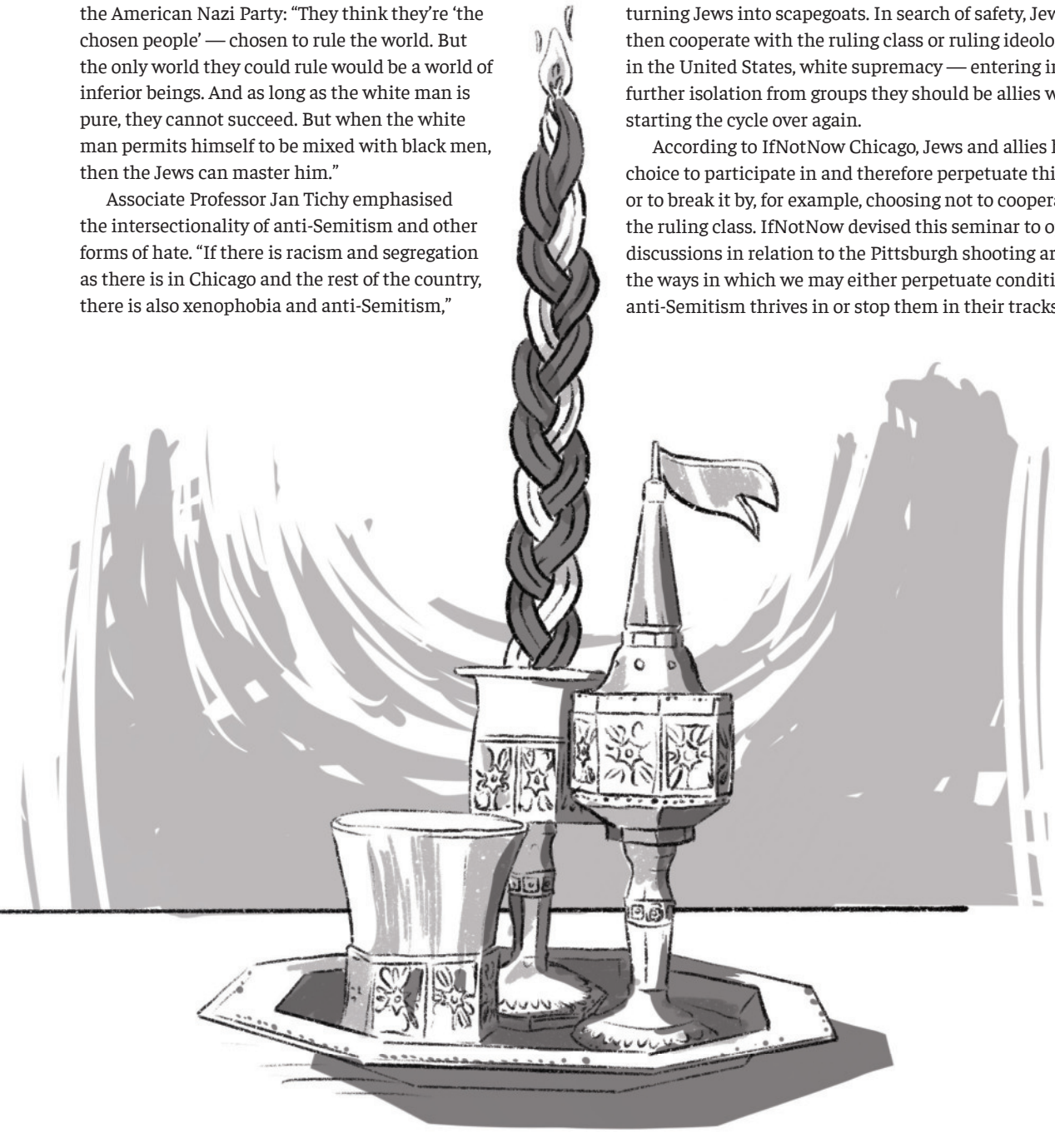
Critical response to the future

Klonsky emphasises that the first vigil in Chicago after the shooting was organized as an intentionally interfaith event. “Society as a whole needs to take a stand that it’s not just a Jewish issue, even if it were Jews who were targeted,” she tells F Newsmagazine. “It’s never been the case that Jews can be safe and secure in our country in isolation, or in adversity against the other oppressed communities.”

Tirtza Even, Associate Professor in Film, Video, New Media and Animation at SAIC, compared the culture of violence that produced the shooting to Israel’s culture of violence against Palestine. “I feel sadness and anger for the victims of the Tree of Life attack, as I would for any other innocent victims of violence. But I also believe that since the inception of the state of Israel 70 years ago, the Jews have been less frequently victims of violence than they have been perpetrators of it,” she says. “The culture in Israel resembles all too often the one stirred and awakened by Trump and his thugs. Extreme and violent acts like those perpetrated by his followers on the people in the synagogue, are a daily occurrence for Palestinians in Israel/Palestine.”

When asked what, if anything, might change in the aftermath of the shooting, Yeker was ambivalent. “I’m not sure how the landscape will change, because it has been in flames for so long,” she says. “Right now all we can do is hold on tight to one another and continue mobilizing, fighting for justice, and believing in our truths.”

Klonsky described the way forward as collective action. “We can’t respond to it only as Jews, because then we’re screwing ourselves. We’re always going to be in a minority in this country, so if we really are only for ourselves, we’re doomed.”



Casey Carsel (MFAW 2019) is Managing Editor at F Newsmagazine. Her Japanese isn’t helping her Yiddish.

Wouldn't You Love to ...

*Trump tweeted in 2012.
But what are ratings, even?

by **Dustin Lowman**

Having recently passed the two-year mark, President Donald Trump's term has set all manner of new standards. He is as simultaneously worshipped and reviled a man as has ever occupied the post, particularly so with help from online echo chambers. As of last year, Trump's 43% White House staff turnover rate more than doubled that of every administration since 1981, when National Journal began keeping track (Ronald Reagan's had the previous record, at 17%). To boot, while no official statistic is available, Trump has undoubtedly set the record for presidential tweets.

It initially comes as a bit of a surprise, then, that his approval rating sits at an unsensational 40%. For reference, at the same point in his presidency, Barack Obama's approval rating sat only moderately higher, at 46.6%. But for Obama, who had entered office at 64.1%, this represented a much more significant decline. Trump's current number represents a slight fall from its own high water mark of 48% on his sixth day in office. But given that the figure is the product of the most polarized public reaction ever, in which 84% of Republicans approve and only 7% of Democrats do, the 40% statistic itself is a bit of a red herring. It reads like slightly negative consensus, but it actually stems from unprecedented division.

As we can see, a president's approval rating is a limited statistic. Similar numbers tell vastly different stories for different presidents. Like the stock market, their ups and downs are unpredictable, as they depend largely on the public's knee-jerk reactions to recent events. That said, on the strength of similar polls, the Gallup Organization — responsible for the advent of presidential approval ratings, starting with Franklin Roosevelt in 1937 — correctly predicted all but three presidential elections between 1938 and 2012. So, limited though they may be, the figures have some merit.

To contextualize Trump's numbers, and to learn something more about the forces guiding presidential approval ratings, I analyzed data on each of the fourteen presidents whose approval ratings have been measured. To see how Trump stacks up, I stuck mostly to presidents' first two years, though to really understand how and why public sentiment can change, I also looked beyond. These are some of my more significant findings.



Best Loved: John F. Kennedy

Through two years, Kennedy's approval rating sat at 76%, a fair representation of its average mark through the early part of his time in office. Kennedy's approval rating never dipped below 50%, though it had been steadily declining at the time he was assassinated.



Less Loved: Gerald Ford

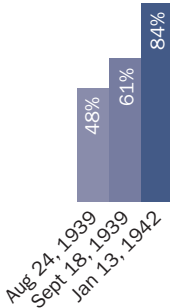
Ford succeeded Richard Nixon, who departed in disgrace. Before the Watergate scandal, Nixon had won his 1972 re-election bid in a landslide, and his approval rating was flirting with 70%. But, by the time he resigned, Nixon's approval rating had plummeted to 25%. Among Gerald Ford's first acts in office was pardoning Nixon, whom 58% of people participating in a Gallup poll felt should be tried for possible criminal charges. The country responded in kind; the pardon coincided with a major drop in Ford's rating, from 71% to 49%. It would bottom out at 35% and then generally remain below half. Ford was not re-elected.

*Over the first two years of a presidency

Rule: War is good for an approval rating boost — at least in the short term.

Proof: Franklin Delano Roosevelt's rating fared well throughout World War II, spiking after Germany invaded Poland (Sept 1939) and after the attack on Pearl Harbor (Dec 1941). The start of the Gulf War (Jul 1990) increased George H.W. Bush's rating considerably; in the war's final month (Feb 1991) it reached its highest mark. Both 9/11 and the Invasion of Iraq (Mar 2003) buoyed George W. Bush's rating. 9/11 pushed it to the highest recorded approval rating ever. In the case of Iraq, it had been falling, and the invasion coincided with a substantial gain. Even the farcical, failed Bay of Pigs Invasion (Apr 1961) spiked John F. Kennedy's to its highest mark.
Exception that proves it: The Korean War (Jul 1950), which sank Truman's rating irretrievably.

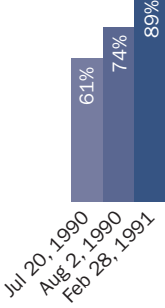
Franklin Delano Roosevelt



John F. Kennedy



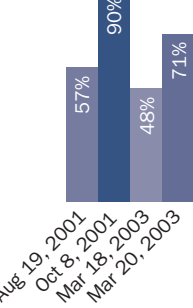
George H.W. Bush



Harry Truman



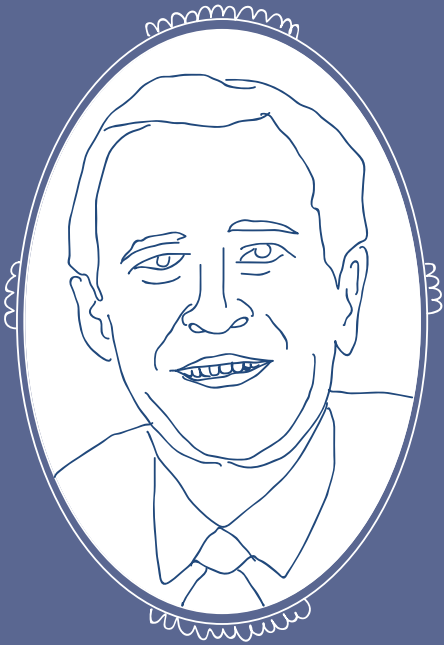
George W. Bush



Rule: Controversy is bad for approval ratings.

Proof: Watergate completely sunk Nixon's rating. His first post-re-election poll (Feb 1973) showed his highest mark, but after his staffers' televised Senate hearings (May 1973) it fell below half. When the Supreme Court ordered the release of taped conversations (Jul 1974), it reached its lowest mark. Watergate would also hurt Ford. The first poll released after he pardoned Nixon (Sept 1974) showed a precipitous approval rating drop, from which Ford never recovered. The Iran Hostage Crisis (Nov 1979 - Jan 1981), which Jimmy Carter failed to resolve either militarily or diplomatically (and which Reagan later resolved promptly), led to a major approval rating dip and then a failed re-election bid. After it emerged that Oliver North, National Security Council staff member, had destroyed documents related to Ronald Reagan's personal involvement in Iran-Contra (Dec 1986), Reagan's rating fell below half for the first time in four years.
Exception that proves it: The Clinton-Lewinsky scandal (Jan 1998), which actually led to an increase in Clinton's approval rating.

Have My Ratings?*



Biggest Change (Positive): George W. Bush

The 2000 presidential election was extraordinarily contentious. Democratic Party nominee Al Gore received roughly 500,000 more votes than Bush, but 5 fewer Electoral College votes, ultimately due to a Supreme Court ruling which awarded Bush Florida's 25 votes. Appropriately, Bush's approval rating would hover around 50% until September 11, 2001. The event's tragedy combined with the country's perceived vulnerability ballooned Bush's approval rating to 92%, the highest mark for any president, ever. Unfortunately for Bush, it was all downhill from there. Throughout the next seven years, Bush's rating steadily declined, spending most of his second term in the 30% range, and dipping a few times to 19% — the lowest mark for any president, ever.



Biggest Change (Negative): Harry Truman

Truman, who took over for the four-times-elected Franklin D. Roosevelt, enjoyed a honeymoon period upon entering office. His rating opened at an astonishing 87%, and would remain high for most of his first year. However, following the conclusion of World War II, Truman's crude, bullish handling of striking labor unions plummeted his rating to 33%. Truman's mercurial temperament was reflected in his highly volatile approval rating, evidenced best by this sequence of peaks and valleys: 87% → 33% → 64% → 36% → 69% → 22%.

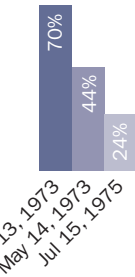
So, what does it all mean?

The presidential approval rating has historically been an effective representation of how the public feels about their leader. Presidents with low approval ratings at re-election time have generally not been re-elected, and presidents with high ratings generally have been. We've yet to see whether this rule applies to Donald Trump, whose approval rating has never exceeded 50%. We do know that at election time in 2016, Trump fared worse than Hillary Clinton in most major polls, but was still elected. Trump's team has since been under FBI investigation for suspected collusion with Russia, but while major Trump allies like Paul Manafort and Michael Cohen have received prison sentences, no evidence has yet emerged that definitively delegitimizes the 2016 election's result.

Trump is the major exception in many political categories. In addition to the examples listed above, he defied — and possibly rewrote — campaign strategy guidelines in 2016. For the first time since 1938, the Gallup Organization chose not to run predictive polls for the 2016 presidential election. Whether because the market was flooded with pollsters or because they sensed polls' diminishing accuracy, it signaled a major first for Gallup. The 2020 election will mark the first test of Trump's presidential approval rating, and will have major implications for the future of polling.

Big thanks to FiveThirtyEight's daily updating calculation of Trump's approval rating, and the Roper Center's archive of presidential approval rating data.

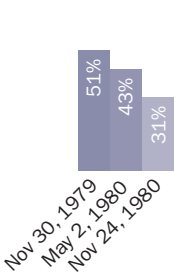
hard
on



Gerald
Ford



Jimmy
Carter



Rule: During a new President's first two years, their approval rating falls.

Proof: Ten out of 13 presidents' approval ratings dropped over their first two years in office (FDR's first two years were not measured). Especially dramatic examples include Truman, Carter, and Obama.
Exception that Proves it: Dwight Eisenhower, Bush I, and Bush II, all of whose numbers were buoyed, in that interval, by war.

Harry
Truman



Barack
Obama



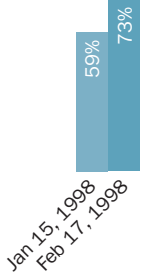
Jimmy
Carter



Donald
Trump



Bill
Clinton



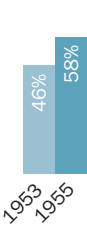
Dwight
Eisenhower



George
H.W. Bush



George W.
Bush



Dustin Lowman (MFAW 2020) is a published poet and singer/songwriter with tracks available to purchase in all digital stores.



BLEEDING HEARTS

How the St. Valentine's Day Massacre made crime pay

by **Georgia Hampton**

An oddities market, a roller derby match, a costume party. Even a one-day-only CrossFit challenge. All of these seemingly unrelated things have chosen the same theme for their mid-February events: the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. Across the country, comic book shops and tapas restaurants alike are choosing to pay homage to the notorious mob hit, 90 years after that bloody day shocked the world and brought Al Capone to the pinnacle of notoriety. But just like Al Capone, whose reputation for ruthless violence has been replaced with an abundance of poorly rendered portraits of the gangster plastered across the walls of countless pizzerias, the details of the massacre itself have faded over time. So, for the sake of history, let us remember the St. Valentine's Day Massacre for what it was, what it did, and how its changed the course of American crime.

The history

In 1929, much like today, gun violence had become common. Organized crime was not invented in this decade, but it was bolstered with the help of Prohibition. Purchasing, selling, and consuming liquor may have been illegal, but the demand was still there. And organized gangs — such as the Mafia and other ethnic gangs — were more than willing to facilitate the process. Quickly, the smuggling of liquor became a sophisticated business, one that involved local police and government officials who would conveniently look the other way so long as they got their money's worth.

The kind of power that came from these operations was deeply coveted but not easily won. And in the 1920s, as the Mafia was beginning to organize, that violence was particularly pronounced. In the Castellammarese War, for example, violence erupted between New York's two biggest Italian-American gangs, leaving mob boss Salvatore Maranzano dead, murdered by up-and-comer Lucky Luciano.

In Chicago, the situation was similar. Al Capone, the Chicago crime boss largely assumed to be responsible for the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, had built an empire out of the illegal smuggling, distillation, and distribution of alcohol. He had also built a reputation for ruthless violence. Initially working with mob boss Johnny Torrio, Capone led violent intimidation campaigns and murder hits on rival gangs. In one case, the two men led a bloody effort to rig mayoral elections, resulting in some voters being shot and killed. These kinds of acts were usually met with more violence. And every time, Capone narrowly avoided prosecution.

Slowly, as rival gangs disbanded or were otherwise eliminated, Capone began cementing his control over the bootlegging business in Chicago. The more power he attained, the more his violent reputation preceded him.

The massacre

By 1929, Al Capone was within a reachable distance of the coveted role of Chicago's lead crime boss, but he was not the only one eyeing the proverbial throne. An Irish crime leader, George "Bugs" Moran, had begun his own bootlegging operation, which he ran outside of a North Side garage. He was sworn enemies with Capone, and both gangsters had tried — and failed — to kill the other. Moran was the one major obstacle in the way of Capone's ascent to total domination of the city of Chicago. So, something had to be done about that.

On February 14, 1929, seven members of Moran's operation were gunned down inside his garage, firing squad-style. The police later found out through eyewitness reports that the gunmen dressed as police officers and acted like they were arresting the seven men, then forced them to face the wall before riddling their bodies with bullets. Moran escaped the violence. Some sources said that he was warned ahead of time; others said that he had merely slept in.

With his biggest rival now short seven men, Al Capone slid to the top of the Chicago crime heap with ease. With ties from the police all the way up to the mayor's office and no major rivals in his way, Capone ran Chicago. But not for long. The St. Valentine's Day Massacre made the gangster the most notorious man in America, with the Chicago Crime Commission labeling Capone as "Public Enemy No. 1."

Capone was never officially tied to the massacre, though Bugs Moran was quick to link him to it. Vacationing in his Florida home, Capone had an alibi that kept him from prosecution, and ultimately left the massacre with no official instigator. Still, the event would become a turning point in Capone's career and, interestingly, in the relationship between the United States and guns.



The aftermath

Beginning just one month after the massacre, Capone was to move in and out of the United States prison system, serving multiple short jail sentences for minor crimes and then being released, only to repeat the process again. It wasn't until 1931 that Capone was sentenced to 11 years jail time for tax evasion, out of which time Capone served only seven years. By the time he was released, Capone's mental state had severely deteriorated due to syphilitic dementia. He never returned to Chicago or to the empire of organized crime he had built.

But that fatal February day brought about a major change: the first-ever gun law in the United States. The St. Valentine's Day Massacre was the most recent in a long string of cases of gangland violence, and in 1933 the newly elected Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to curtail this bloodshed.

The National Firearms Act of 1934 put a \$200 tax on short-barrelled shotguns and rifles, along with fully automated weapons such as machine guns. This targeted the kinds of guns used in gangland crime, including the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. \$200 in 1934 roughly equates to \$3,500 by today's standards. In a time of economic turmoil in the United States, this was steep enough to deter the use of these kinds of weapons.

But while the St. Valentine's Day Massacre did much to mobilize the United States government to react to the steady rise in gang violence, it would be foolish to suggest that it did much to slow it down. The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 led gangs to expand their businesses beyond bootlegging, and by the mid-20th century there were 24 crime families in the United States.

Back to the present

Ninety years after the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, just as Al Capone's likeness has come to represent the quintessential gangland wiseguy, the event has undergone its own historical facelift. And there's not much that can be done to stop the recontextualization of this act of violence into a theme idea for a motorcycle rally or disc golf competition. It's easier to turn the St. Valentine's Day Massacre into a myth, but what we can do is try to re-remember and re-learn this history.

Georgia Hampton (MANAJ 2020) is the News Editor at F Newsmagazine. You can listen to her on The Peach Pit through SAIC's Free Radio. She can't find her phone, can you call it?

A list of movies for when you need a little love.

by Kaycie Surrell

Traditional romantic comedies like “Sleepless in Seattle” and “When Harry Met Sally” used to be the definitive films of the genre. A closer look at these reveal that they’re less about “romance,” and more about “perpetuating the idea that women need men to be happy and fulfilled.” Case in point: the 1998 classic, “You’ve Got Mail.” By today’s standards, the romantic comedy starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan feels more like the story of a jerk who tricks a woman he met online into falling in love with him while he moves his corporate bookstore into her neighborhood, thus driving her small bookshop out of business.

I offer an alternative list of eight titles, some romantic and some not, perfect for Valentine’s Day and every other damn day, too. Each of these pairs nicely with a large pizza, a case of grapefruit-flavored bubble water, and a chocolate cake in a mug.

But I’m a Cheerleader (1999)

The ‘90s really delivered when it came to feminist comedies. A young Natasha Lyon plays a high school cheerleader whose parents, suspecting she’s a lesbian, send her to lesbian conversion therapy camp. When she gets there she’s introduced to ‘90s Queen Clea DuVall and they fall in love. What happens next is beautiful and magical and I want you to watch so I’m not going to tell you any more, except that RuPaul is involved.

Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (2004)

An unexpected inclusion, perhaps. But let’s break down the plot: Girl gets whisked off to Cuba just before the impending Cuban Revolution. She’s smart. She reads. She thinks for herself. While her classmates are busy being mean and cool and American, she’s defending the very, very, very good looking Diego Luna who can dance and has one of those cute-boy winks like all great cute boys do (Jim Sturgess, Ryan Gosling, The Rock). She then learns to dance thanks to Patrick Swayze and woos Luna and it’s all very romantic and sensual. Plus Mya (of Lady Marmalade fame) is in it.

The Hairy Bird (1998)

Unfairly renamed “All I Wanna Do” for sensitive American audiences and “Strike” for Canadian audiences, this film is about four prep-school darlings who love to stir shit up. They’re always in trouble for something, and they form a secret club called the Daughters of the American Ravioli and eat canned ravioli while they gossip. They each want to grow up to be something extraordinary. Maureen is an aspiring biologist, while Verena hopes to start her own magazine. Odette is interested in politics, and Tinka plans to be an “actress-folksinger-slut.” The group is based on real best friends (including Glenn Close!) who attended an all-girls school called Rosemary Hall.

8 FLICKS TO FUEL YOUR FIX

9 to 5 (1980)

I would be remiss not to mention this classic starring the iconic Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, and Dolly Parton. I can barely handle this cast. It’s almost too good to be true. And for those of you that haven’t given it a chance, put it on your list of goals for 2019 because it’s practically part of the feminism handbook at this point, right along with “Mean Girls” and “Thelma and Louise.” This plot is wild, y’all. Three women band together to take down their sexist boss and while he’s gone they totally fix everything by implementing equal pay, daycare, and flexible hours. When the head of the company finds out, they get promoted and follow their dreams. Like I said, wild.

Frida (2002)

“Frida” stars Salma Hayek as Frida Kahlo and Alfred Molina as her husband, painter Diego Rivera. Salma Hayek is PERFECTION as Frida Kahlo. She likely ushered in a sexual awakening for thousands of adoring fans, thanks to her onscreen flirtations and sexual relationships with women, such as Ashley Judd as Tina Modati, and Karine Plantadit as the famous French burlesque performer Josephine Baker. The film celebrates Kahlo’s achievements but is honest about her experiences with pain and suffering. It’s also stunningly beautiful, taking Kahlo’s expansive body of work and bringing it into the real world (often literally).

What’s Love Got to Do with It (1993)

Tina Turner is a powerful, beautiful, stunning star and Angela Bassett’s portrayal of Tina is EMOTIONAL. Laurence Fishburne plays Ike Turner and together they are a volatile pair. Keep in mind, this means some pretty violent and graphic scenes, true to their relationship. And remember that Tina comes out on top, making a name for herself thanks to songs like “What’s Love Got to Do with It,” “Proud Mary,” and my favorite, a track written and produced by Phil Spector in 1966 called “River Deep — Mountain High.”

Ginger Snaps (2000)

A very cool Canadian film about two sisters, both morbid outcasts, who plan on dying together. Brigitte and her older sister Ginger are on their way to sabotage a mean, popular girl when Ginger starts her period and attracts a mysterious night beast who attacks her. She survives but gets ultra sexy overnight. When she starts to sprout patches of fur and grow a tail, things go from campy to sinister. It’s a heartfelt story about the bond between sisters, and also what happens when a hormonal werewolf mauls horny teenage boys by the pale moonlight.

She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry (2014)

Yes, this is a documentary, but it’s a well-deserved inclusion to this list. I completely support any holiday where one method of celebration includes chocolate and/or crying, and this retelling of the second-wave feminist movement by the women who started it will definitely make you cry. Interviews with the founding women of organizations like the Women’s International Conspiracy from Hell and the National Organization for Women are only part of what makes this documentary special. It’s touching, and it reminds us of the women who came before and fought for us all.

‘Roma’: a Portrait of Mexico

Alfonso Cuarón tells a semi-biographical tale about the women who raised him

by **Luis López Levi**



When I went to see “Roma” on its very first screening in Chicago, I was positively surprised to see a full theater. That doesn’t happen with every limited-release, black and white, foreign language film. Furthermore, I noticed many audience members, me included, were Mexicans who invited non-Mexicans to watch it with them. Before it started, I could hear their Mexican accents in English as they talked to their fellow movie-goers about the film’s praise or the sociopolitical context it is set in. There was a sense of excitement in the audience. Or more accurately, in us. We were eager to see ourselves on the screen.

And see ourselves we did. Alfonso Cuarón’s black and white, passion project won two Golden Globes on January 6 and is nominated for 10 Oscars, including Best Picture. But beyond that, “Roma,” simply put, is Mexico.

Written, directed, photographed, co-edited and co-produced by Cuarón, the film naturally tells his personal story. In such an intimate portrayal of life in 1970s Mexico City, he shows us Mexico in all its grandeur, its ups and downs, and the historic moments that envelop daily life.

For one, it features Mexico in a specific time and place. Named after the historic middle-class neighborhood in Mexico City where Cuarón grew up, “Roma” is a semi-biographical memoir of his childhood and the women who raised him. It shows his mother Sofia (Academy Award nominee for Best Supporting Actress Marina de Távira) struggling to keep her marriage afloat for her four children. But it mostly focuses on Cleo, the housemaid and nanny, stunningly performed by first-time actor Yalitza Aparicio. She does the dishes, sweeps the garage, and makes sure to turn off all the lights at night. But she also tucks the children in to bed, dresses them, picks them up at school and constantly reminds them that she loves them.

Cleo is almost family, but not quite, and Cuarón brilliantly tackles the nuances of this relationship, all too common among middle-class Mexican families with live-in domestic workers. Sofia kindly listens to Cleo’s concerns and takes her to the doctor when she needs it. She also scolds Cleo, not necessarily for doing something wrong, but rather by matter of the family’s maid being the closest target for her bursts of anger as she seeks stability in her life.

Before “Roma,” Aparicio had prepared to become a pre-school teacher in her hometown of Tlaxiaco in the southern state of Oaxaca. Now she is an Oscar nominee for Best Actress, walking red carpets in film festivals and giving interviews around the world along with the rest of the cast and crew. It may be the first time she’s acted, but God, can she act. Aparicio perfectly embodies the humility that is socially expected of Cleo. She answers questions,

particularly personal ones, with silence, either a slight nod or simply with her eyes. She remains a calm presence next to the family’s emotional rollercoaster, which makes the moment when she eventually shows her own emotional burdens all the more powerful.

Beyond her performance, Aparicio plays a much-needed role in Mexican cinema. Rarely are dark-skinned, indigenous people portrayed in film and television in Mex-

He shows us Mexico in all its grandeur

ico, and when they are, they function as background characters. “Roma,” by contrast, revolves around Cleo. In several scenes, she speaks Mixtec with Adela, the family cook, making this a film that even most Mexicans (me included) need subtitles to fully understand. Few people outside their community can understand their language, but that doesn’t make their stories any less real or important.

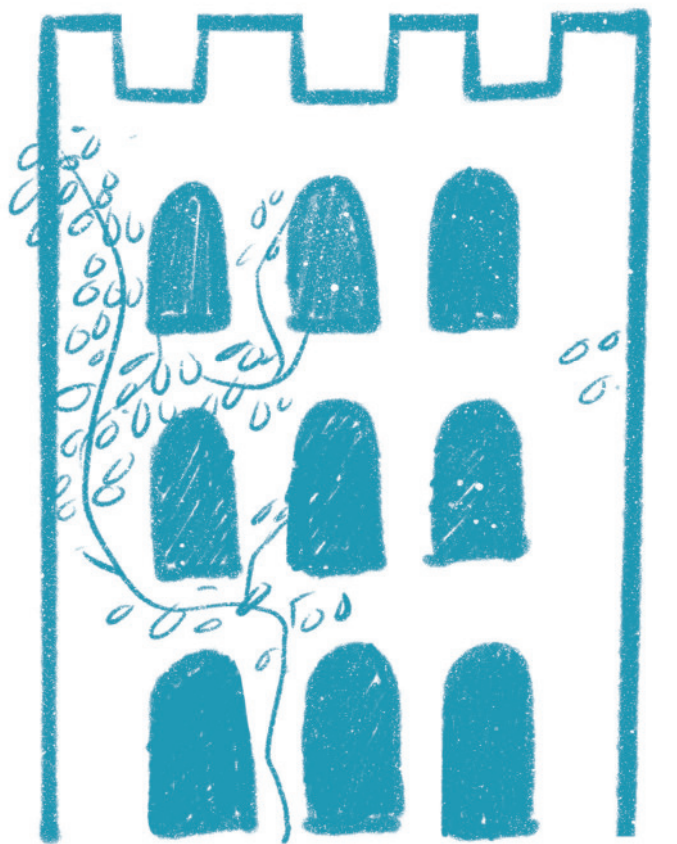
The family’s story, of course, is set to a specific period. You can see it in the fashion, the hairstyles, and the cars, of course, but also in a vintage can of Choco-Milk. The logo of the 1968 Olympics and 1970 World Cup on merchandise, and in the electoral posters for the past President Luis Echeverría. You can also see it in the political unrest and in the way it permeates daily life, whether in a conversation during lunch about a child getting shot for throwing a water balloon at a military vehicle, or a massive riot seen from the window of a furniture store.

But as much as the film is linked to a specific era, it also paints a living, breathing portrait of a Mexico that can still be seen today. It shows in the quiet bedtime prayers and lullabies, in its *eloteros* preparing corn on the cob for children after school, and in the earthquakes. And it does it all in crisp 65 millimeter monochrome film, which Cuarón takes advantage of in virtually every shot. Every single frame is a lesson

in lighting and composition. So much happens at any given moment. The background elements are not a distraction, but rather a complement to the story.

The film has been available for streaming since December 14 on Netflix, but I strongly recommend watching it in a theater if you have the chance. Unfortunately, the only one that showed it in Chicago is no longer screening, but if the Academy awards the film for Best Picture, it might return to the big screen. The photography looks amazing, for one, but the sound design is equally breathtaking. We can hear Mexico in the sonic depiction of a late summer afternoon: a knife sharpener’s whistle rattling the dogs, whose barks echo in the neighbors’ garages. We can hear it too in the sing-song voices of its street vendors. In the political posters preaching prosperity in dirt-road slums, where sandaled women walk to the *tortillería*. We can also hear the screams and chaotic chatter in an overcrowded hospital, with sound so immersive it actually feels like people are talking next to you.

The best part of “Roma,” however, is its pacing. It is a film that lingers. If Cleo goes up or down a flight of stairs, Cuarón (ever a fan of long takes) will show you every single step. If she’s at the movies, you’ll be with her until the lights turn on and the audience stands up and leaves. That’s probably the most authentic element of the film. Life, of course, allows no edits.



Luis López Levi (NAJ 2020) is a former arts reporter, avid podcast listener, vinyl enthusiast, and lover of folk music from around the world. He never turns down free chips and guacamole.



by Aiko Masubuchi

a lot of w's like in
www. looks like a field of grass
and it's true that when we laugh
we like to roll around in w's
and when we type www. we're thinking
not of the whole wide world
but the world wide web which
according to many is more a net
and less a web and in this net
we get sucked in amongst the information
we like to refer to as a sea.
I've never found the blue on a blank screen
in the colors of the ocean. A blue unlike the sky
but a Windows blue.
Sometimes I like to press my fingers against the screen
of my window in the www.
and watch in horror as the colors turn liquid
not unlike trying to piece together my face
in the reflection of a living lake.
Where would we go with the www.
an infinite combination to infinite places.
In the www. my fingers tap one button
three times before the period in www.
I'm waiting for your name. What is your field?
Sometimes it's possible to skip the www. to get places
It seems to be more true that we no longer have to say
www. because everything begins with it anyway.

Frank & Fran: Where Do We Go From Here?

Part Four of the F-Exclusive Mystery Series
by Jesse Stein

Recap of Parts 1-3: Frank and Fran, in pursuit of the neighborhood electricity thief, descend into an underground lair where they discover a shrine to Alicia Keys. The alleged electricity thief returns and, after a surprise attack, Fran knocks him unconscious.

It had been twenty-three minutes since they’d tied the man up. Frank was keeping track. Still unconscious, he breathed like boiling mud. His fingernails were black and sharpened and polished like a badger’s. He had those hobo gloves that cut off above the knuckle. The knotted hairs on his toes breathed easy through the holes in his boots and his gray top teeth rested gently on his drooling bottom lip. Fran paced the room, pulling from the bottle of scotch.

“We got him now, Frankie Boy. Got him right where we want him.” Frank was chaotically sober, trying to remember the breathing exercises his mailman had recommended, checking the hostage’s pulse every time he choked on his own filth.

“This is not good, Fran. I’m too tender to go to jail. They’ll eat me like spaghetti. Slurp me right up.” Fran took a slug from the bottle and wiped her mouth.

“Take it easy, Frankie. No one’s going to slurp you up, ok? Worst case scenario, what, he strokes out? He dies? Who’s gonna know?” She marched over to the Alicia Keys shrine and cracked her knuckles against the frame. “Alicia? You think Alicia’s gonna snitch?”

“Alicia wouldn’t do that.”

“No, Alicia wouldn’t do that. So we’re fine.”

“But what if ...” The gurgling stopped cold. Frank froze. Fran grimaced and walked over, grabbing Frank by the scruff of his neck, and the two of them crouched, looking into the hostage’s rank face. His mouth was soupy, his tongue green and lolling.

“Fran, I think ...”

The hostage’s jaw twitched.

“DEVILS RIPPING RENDING

EATING I WILL EAT YOU!”

Frank jumped up onto Fran’s shoulders, shrieking like a starved billy goat. The man was fully alive, thrashing and spitting and trying to scrape his teeth against the duct tape that barely held him in place. Fran judoed Frank off of her shoulders and kicked the chair over, sending the hostage, growling and gnashing, cheek-first onto the cement. Frank went fetal underneath Alicia Keys.

Fran beat the flashlight into her palm and stood over the hostage. “Listen up, you shit. You’re not too great at breathing. You could use some more practice, I think. So I suggest calming down or I’ll take that option away from you.” Frank spread his fingers wide over his face so he could see.

“Oh my god, who even are you? What the hell did they do to you in Daughters of Venus?”

Fran kept her eyes on the hostage, scraping her nails against the flashlight. “They prepared me, Frank. They prepared me. Now, you. Are you ready to answer some questions?

The hostage whimpered and nodded meekly.

“Good boy.” Fran heaved him upright. “Let’s start simple. What’s your name?”

“Fungus, Fungus. They call me that.”

“Ok, Fungus. Why are you stealing my power?”

Fungus’ oily lips quivered. “Save her. I must save her. The time is near, yes, I must save her. I needed the light. The light to plan.”

Fran cocked an eyebrow. “You don’t have anyone to save. You’re all alone down here.”

Fungus shook his fraying gray rat’s nest hair. “Her! He’s going to take her! Barry is ... Oh, wretched evil man.”

“I’ll bite. Who’s Barry going to take?”

Fungus looked up with his shimmering badger eyes and pointed his chin at the poster above Frank’s head.

“I think you’ve been eating too much dirt, Fungus. Breathing those fumes, huh?”

“Wait a minute.” Frank was on his feet now, tennis spectating between Fungus and his shrine. “You’re telling me, Alicia’s in danger? From Barry?”

“Barry is wretched and murderous he is. Crumble the tunnel, trap her, evil man.”

“Fran, I think we’ve got something here.”

“Shut the fuck up, Frank.”

“I think we need to hear him out.”

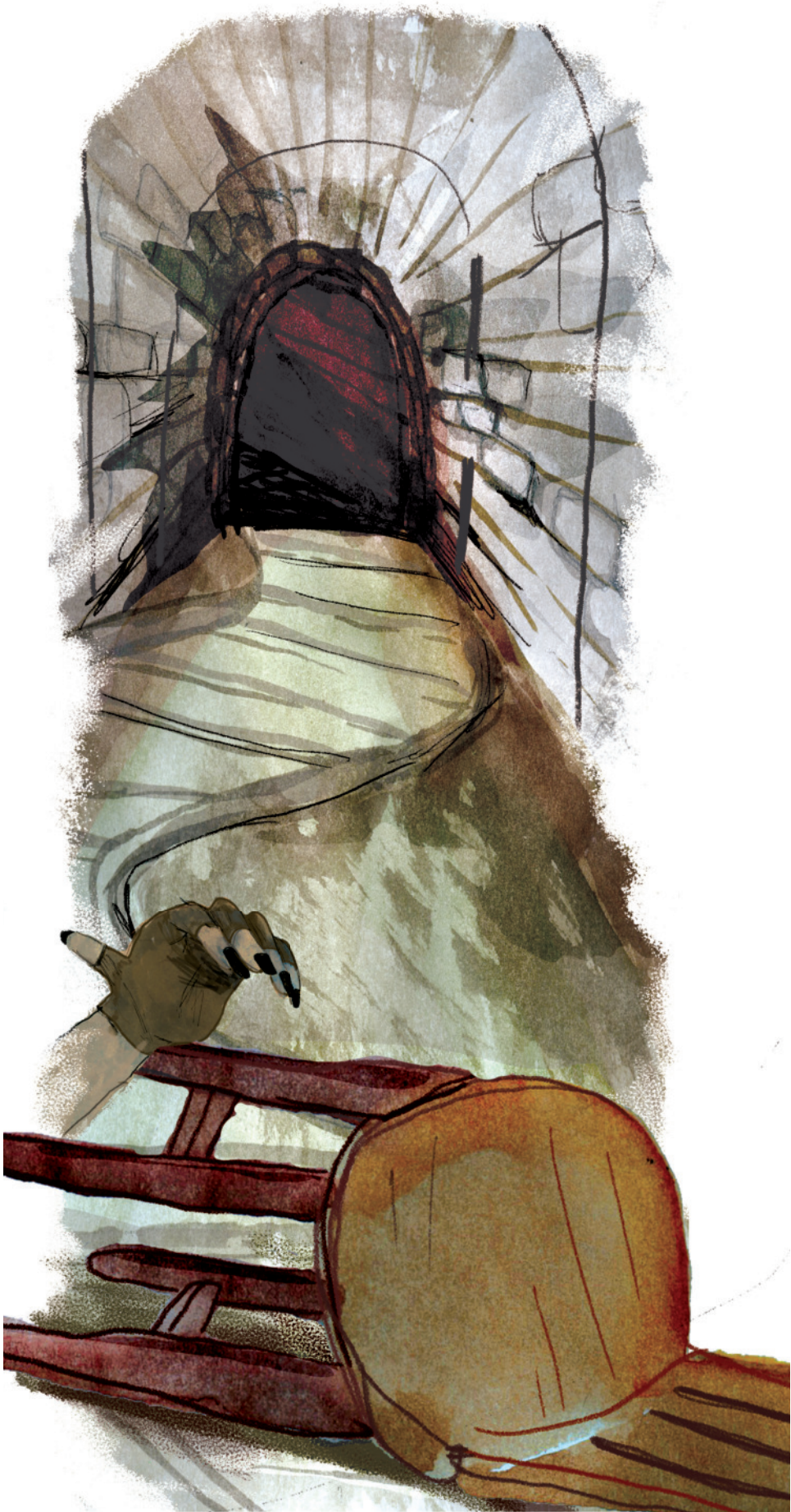
“You’ve lost your mind.”

“I’m a community college graduate, and I have a firm grasp on my faculties, thank you very much.”

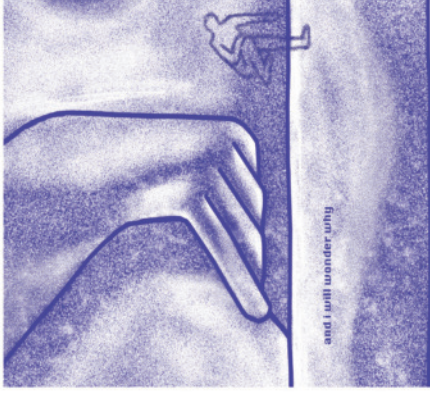
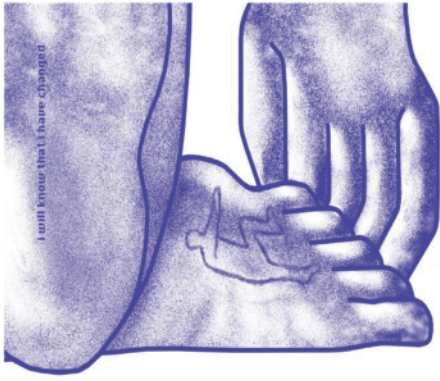
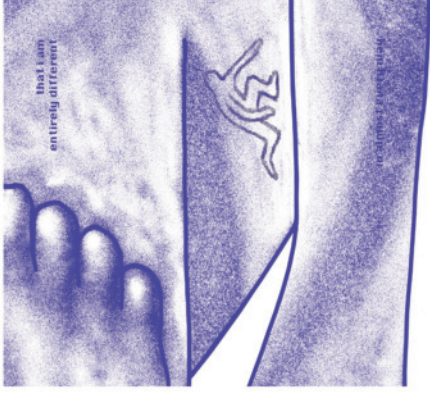
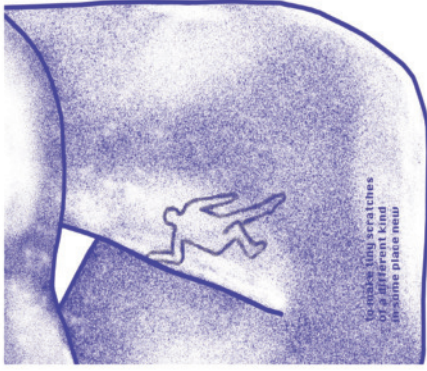
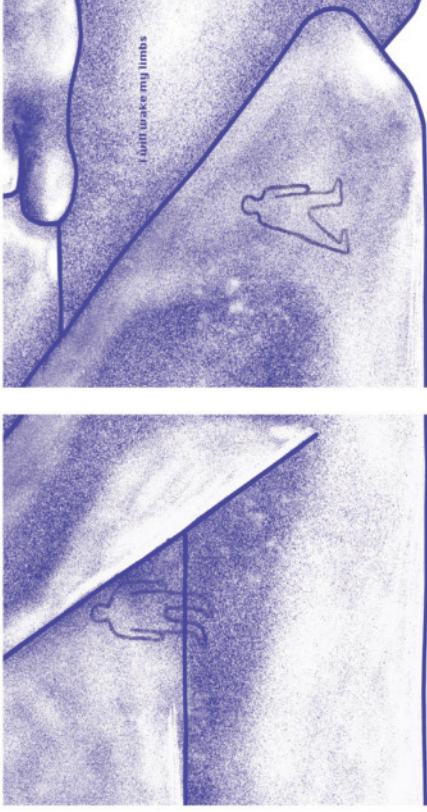
“This has been a tough day for you.”

“God damn it, Fran. You drag me out here, you know, force me into some, electricity ven-detta, shame me into abetting a hostage situation, I mean, Jesus, you know? Let’s hear him out. Go ahead, Fungus.”

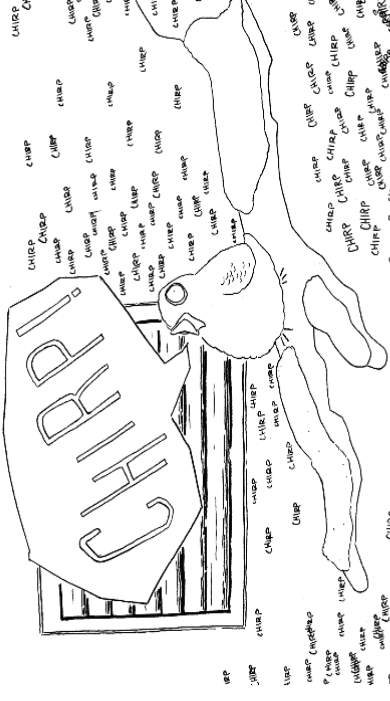
“Listen up, you shit. You’re not too great at breathing. You could use some more practice.”



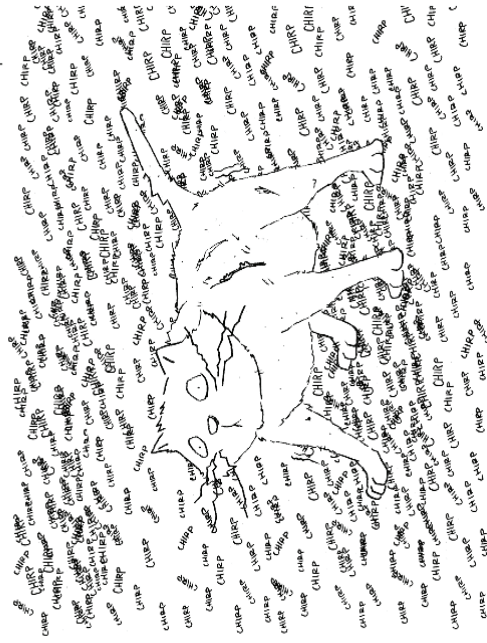
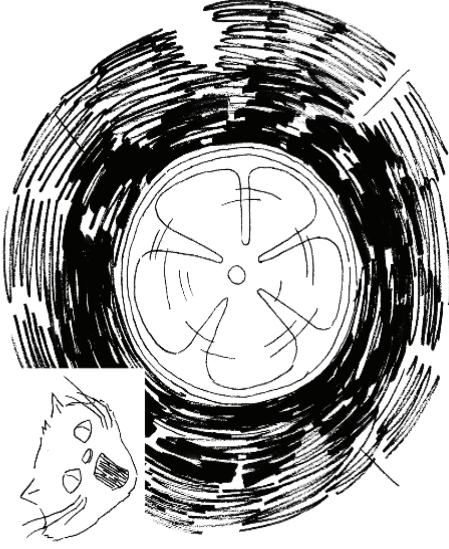
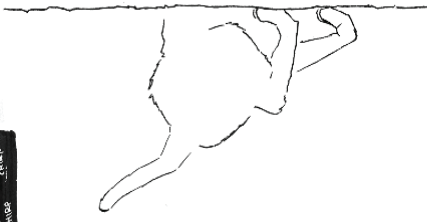
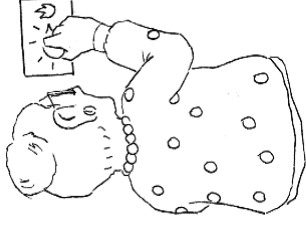
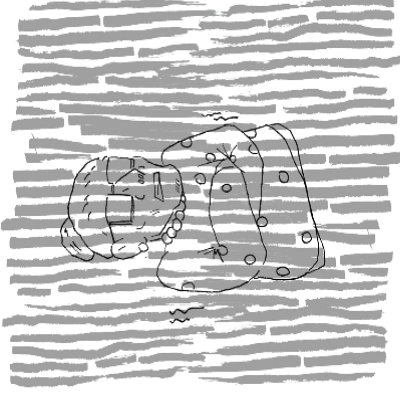
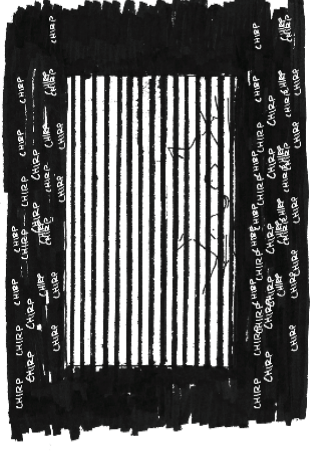
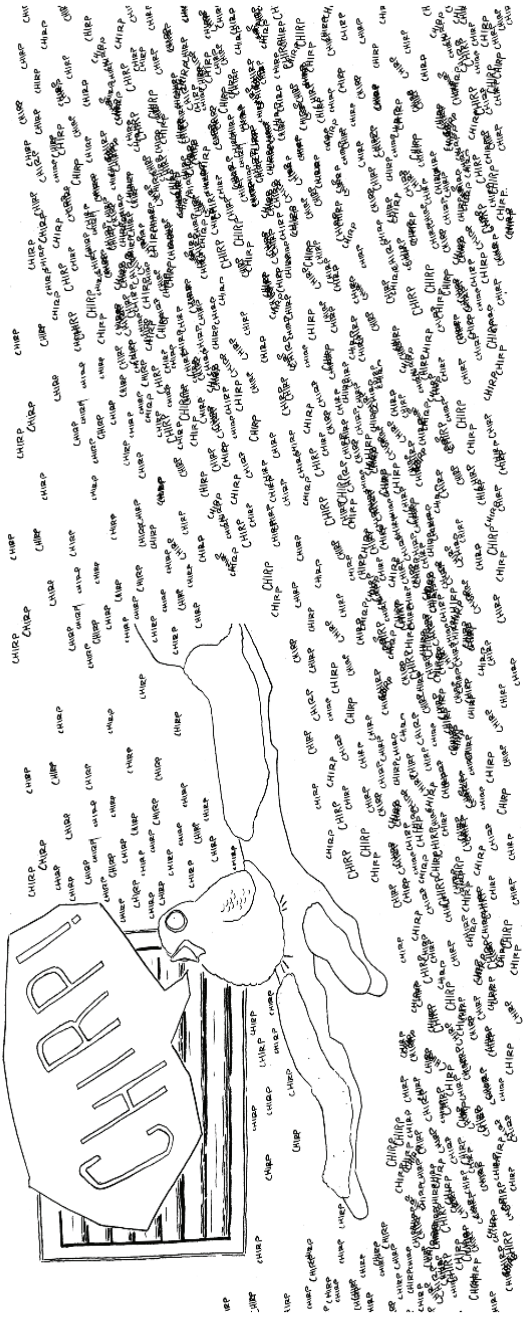
Stay tuned — Frank & Fran will be back with Part Five in March!



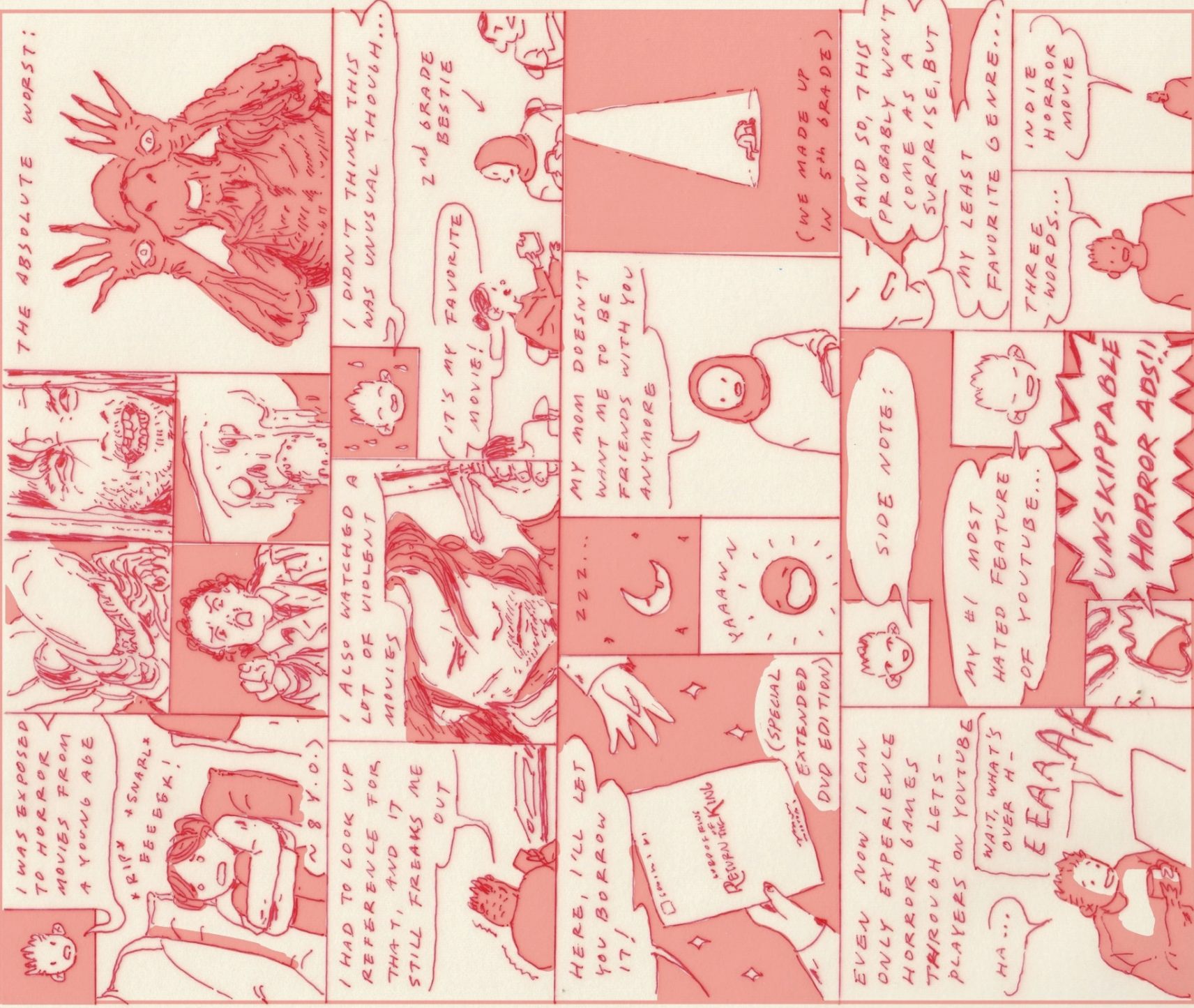
DENTURES IN THE SINK



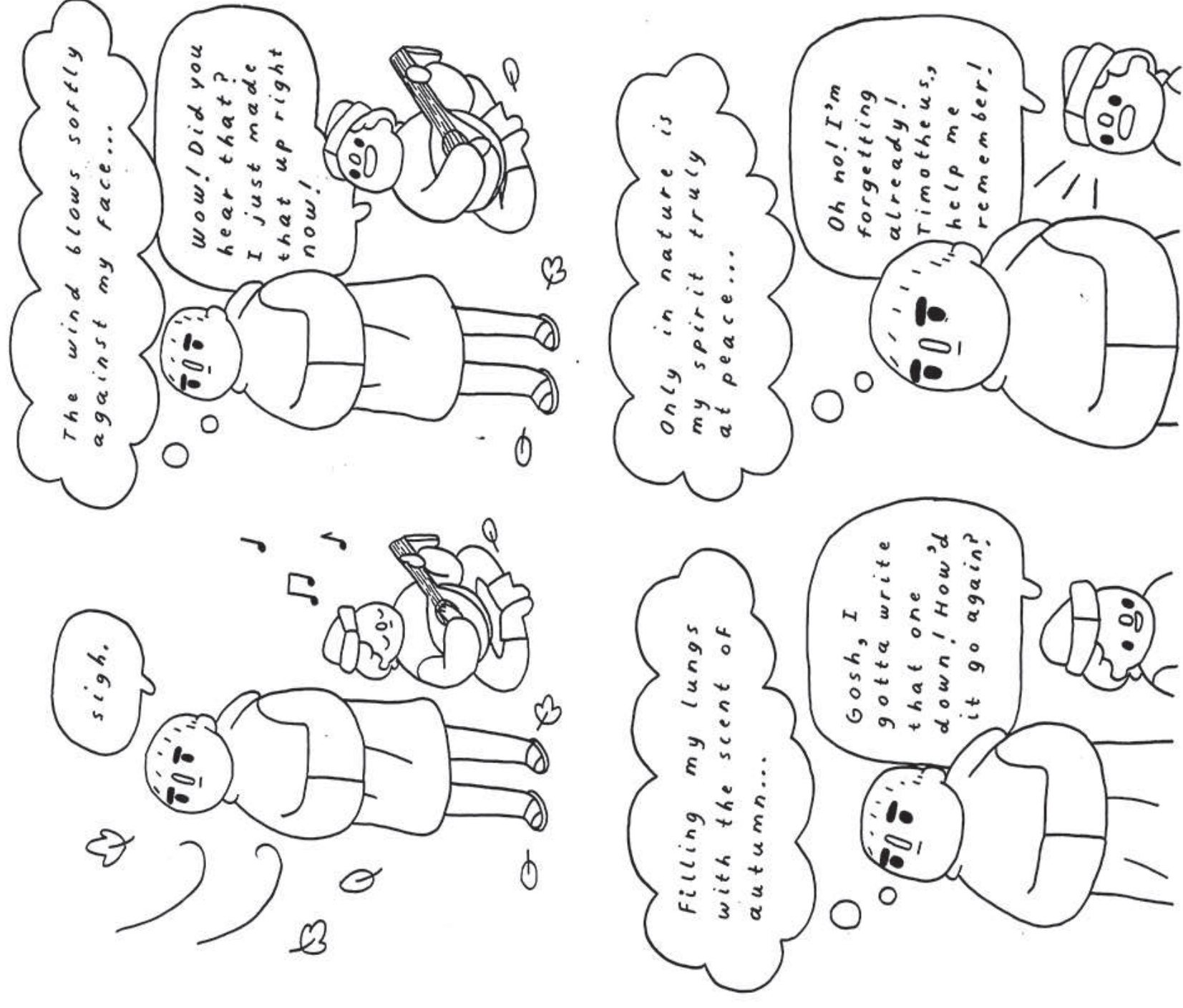
Sofia Diaz



OH, THE HORROR!



TIMOTHEUS and the poem



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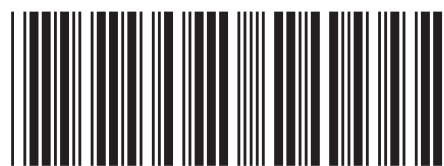
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Pulling that Up

Image and text by **Mikey Wang**



The balls are mingling
The wall is feeling blue
The juice is happy in the room
The plant got tortured
Here the indifference is leaking
Every ball is thinking it is innocent
Pulling that up,
Pulling this imbalance off
Please make them fall in love with each Other

Mikey Wang (BFA 2020) is interested in delineating interior spaces by combining imagination with different art-historical resonances.



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