

fnews magazine

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

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The Climate Issue

Letter from the editor:

The climate crisis we're facing is driven primarily by industry and unceasing industrial growth. Global capitalism is an extremely complex system, and it is in the interest of corporations and the rich to keep that system confusing and obscure. When we purchase an item from Amazon, we are not meant to think about the process of mining the materials for that item, manufacturing it, shipping it to the distribution plant, transporting it to our home within two days, or where the waste from packaging goes after it leaves our garbage bin. We are not meant to think about those materials or those workers.

And despite the dominance of 'woke' contemporary art that critiques these systems, the art world is no exception to it. Board members at the Whitney and the MoMA have been ousted recently for their investments in weapons or Puerto Rico's debt. BP sponsored this year's Chicago Architecture Biennial. In fact, if you walk into our Art Institute and look at the donor boards, you'll see BP up there in the \$10 million donor list.

It is the responsibility of journalists to demystify these systems. In this issue, we look where industry, capital, and environmental damage collide, particularly in the art world and in Chicago. We ask: How is SAIC achieving carbon neutrality? How is our oil paint manufactured? Who is polluting the South Side? Why is BP sponsoring the Chicago Architecture Biennial?

This issue is also the launch of our new Climate Section. From now on, F will print a monthly climate section along with our usual SAIC, News, Arts, Entertainment, Lit, and Comics sections. We promise to keep you informed on these systems, and our place in them.

With you in the resistance,
The F Newsmagazine Staff

February 2020

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The Ol' College Try

SAIC has announced 100% carbon neutrality. But what does that mean, and is it even possible?

by **Leo Smith**

This fall, an email from the School of the Art Institute (SAIC) President Elissa Tenny notified us that our school is poised to become “Carbon Neutral in 2020!” Per the email, SAIC will achieve “carbon neutrality through continued operational changes and future offsets.” What are those changes? What’s an offset? And, most importantly, is it enough?

In 2008, before Tenny’s tenure or the existence of the Sustainability Coordinator’s position, SAIC signed on to the Second Nature Carbon Commitment. This commitment is an institutional promise to make a plan to reduce carbon emissions, and then stick to that plan. The commitment does not specify any particular amount by which colleges should reduce. The commitment is for universities and colleges; the Art Institute itself has signed no such agreement.

A carbon audit followed, performed by SAIC’s Instructional Resources and Facilities Management Department (IRFM) in 2009. SAIC’s carbon footprint consists of 81.4% on-campus energy use (natural gas, electricity, diesel and gasoline from our two campus cars). Next highest is directly financed air travel for staff and faculty, at 5.3%. (See top right graph.)

The audit takes our campus emissions into account, but not energy expended by purchasing (food services, art materials) or the waste generated by those processes.

Since 2009, campus energy emissions have lowered by 18%, mostly thanks to efforts by IRFM and Vice President for Facilities & Campus Operations Thomas Buechele.

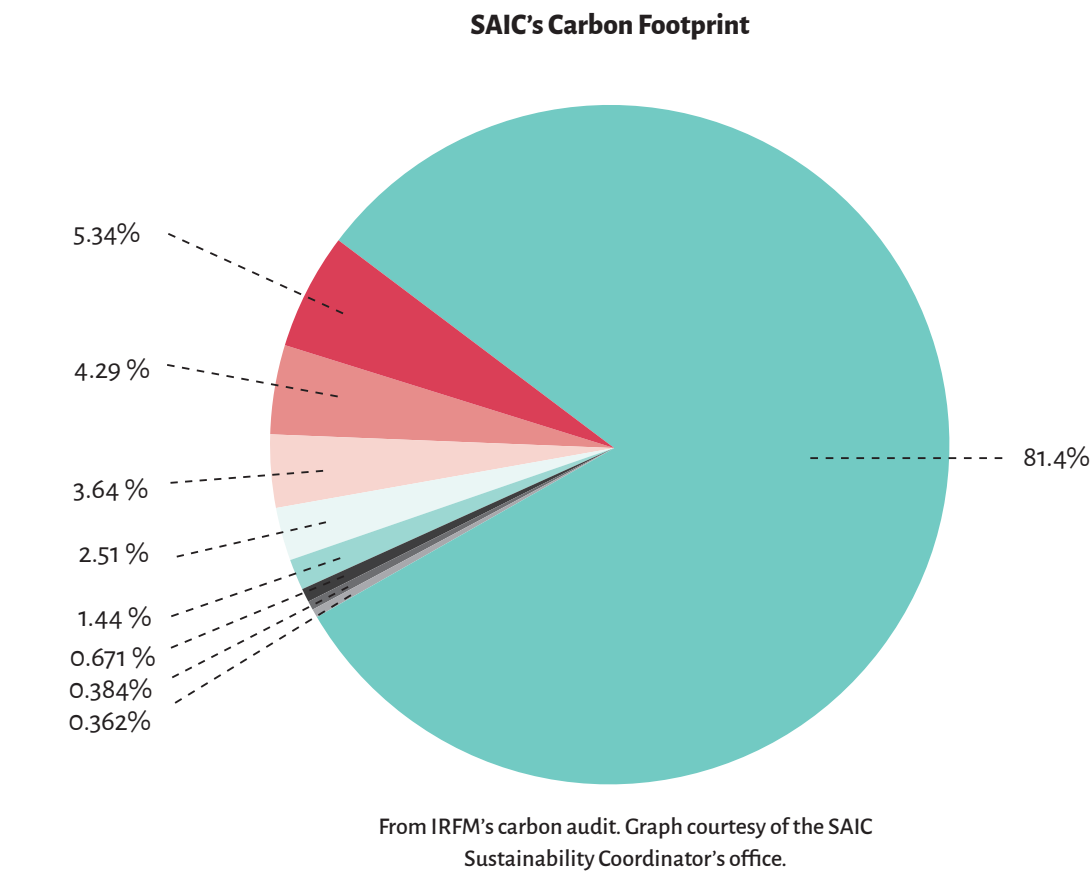
These changes center on how campus buildings are run: Energy management and building automation systems have been installed to manage efficiency and to monitor energy usage in real time, respectively.

SAIC Sustainability Coordinator David Vasquez explained these changes in a presentation on Nov. 5 to the students in Professor Kathryn Schaffer’s Knowing Nature course. The HVAC has also been updated in most buildings, and building light bulbs have been replaced with LEDs, which are on sensor timers. The kilns in Columbus, a huge energy draw, were upgraded to more energy-efficient models.

In terms of on-campus energy use, this is the most we can do, said Vasquez in the presentation. For example, as Schaffer confirmed, we cannot install solar panels on our roofs and run our buildings on our own clean energy. When asked whether this had been considered, Vasquez told F News via email that it had, but “because of our location, sun exposure and limited space it is not an effective way to generate electricity.”

The cafeterias are another area of focus for the Sustainability Office. Vasquez has focused efforts on getting rid of plastic waste. Unfortunately, he said, they can’t control what outside vendors do. “We have started engaging them on what options we have to achieve our goal,” he told F News. “Ideally, we would switch out any plastic bottles with glass or aluminum, and utensils, plates, to-go boxes with compostable alternatives and we would add composting bins in the cafeteria.”

Compost bins have proven difficult to enforce, because students disregard the labeling and throw regular garbage into it. Changing the way students think, says Vasquez, is challenging.



- Staff Commuting
- Paper Purchasing
- Faculty Commuting
- Energy (natural gas, electricity, diesel, gasoline)
- Solid Waste
- Student Commuting
- Refrigerants & Chemicals
- Student Abroad Air Travel
- Directly Financed Air Travel(staff/faculty)

But for some students, these issues are critical. The in-class presentation by Vasquez was met with healthy skepticism and a lively discussion. One student asked, “Is there something we can do to support things that haven’t started changing yet?” Another student suggested incorporating environmentalism into the core curriculum. But they also expressed concern that it could imbue the students with a too-individualistic perspective.

Offsets’ Impact

“We can only reduce our building energy so much,” said Vasquez, in a separate presentation in the Sharp Building on Nov. 21. “Once we get there — and I’m not saying we’re there yet — we should pay for offsets to help.”

So what are offsets? In a carbon offset program, a company or institution sponsors renewable energy efforts, or other environmental projects, to counterbalance the emissions that their institution generates. For example, a museum that burns oil to heat its vast halls in

the cold winter months could invest money in a new wind farm in the prairies. It doesn’t undo their carbon emissions, but it puts in help elsewhere.

Starting in 2020, SAIC plans to invest in offsets equivalent to our continued footprint. As of the presentation on Nov. 21, the administration has not yet decided what type of offsets they will be buying. It could be in the form of solar panels, wind farms, or possibly carbon capture, a controversial procedure.

In general, offsets have generated controversy. Critics view investing in offsets as nothing more than the purchase of a clean conscience. Purchasing offsets isn’t the best solution for SAIC to reach zero, Vasquez agrees, because “offsets don’t create the kind of culture we’re trying to create.” It doesn’t represent a change in institutional behavior, or even individual behavior.

Professor Schaffer agrees too, but the important thing, she says, is to do something.

“We’re beyond the point where we can expect everything to be perfect. We have to move. We have to move in every possible direction,” Shaeffer says. “Acknowledging that offsets are imperfect . . . we have to do it. Because it’s what we can do that’s available, [what] we can do now.”

Schaffer, who oversees the science department at SAIC, will run a new class next semester: The SAIC Carbon Audit (SCIENCE 3260). The students in this class will perform their own independent carbon audit of our campus.

“Students will work in teams to perform their own estimates of the carbon emissions associated with SAIC buildings, utilities use, transportation, instruction, food services, etc,” reads the course description.

“I feel like my life was changed by becoming hooked on the TV series ‘How It’s Made,’” says Schaffer. Seeing those industrial processes firsthand opened her eyes to the reality of modern manufacturing. “The endlessness of the chain of materials becomes immediately apparent.” When you buy one piece of clothing, you ask: Where did the cloth come from? The thread? The machine to sew the thread? The metal to build that machine? The machine to melt the metal?

“That kind of ambiguity is what’s important to emphasize in SAIC science classes,” Schaffer says. “Real-world problem solving has to wrestle with ambiguity.” She adds that the idea for the class crystallized the morning after the 2016 presidential election.

In the class’s carbon audit, they will examine less commonly surveyed areas, like waste and purchasing. Students themselves will decide on the scope of their projects. The final goal of the class is to produce some kind of output that could be shared with the whole school.

“If we were going to make two or three achievable changes, what would they be?” Schaffer asks. “The answers for infrastructure are really well-defined. But what about behavior? Culture? Food? Habits?”

But in the meantime, “The perfect solution isn’t here. Something that is here is offsets.”

More to Come

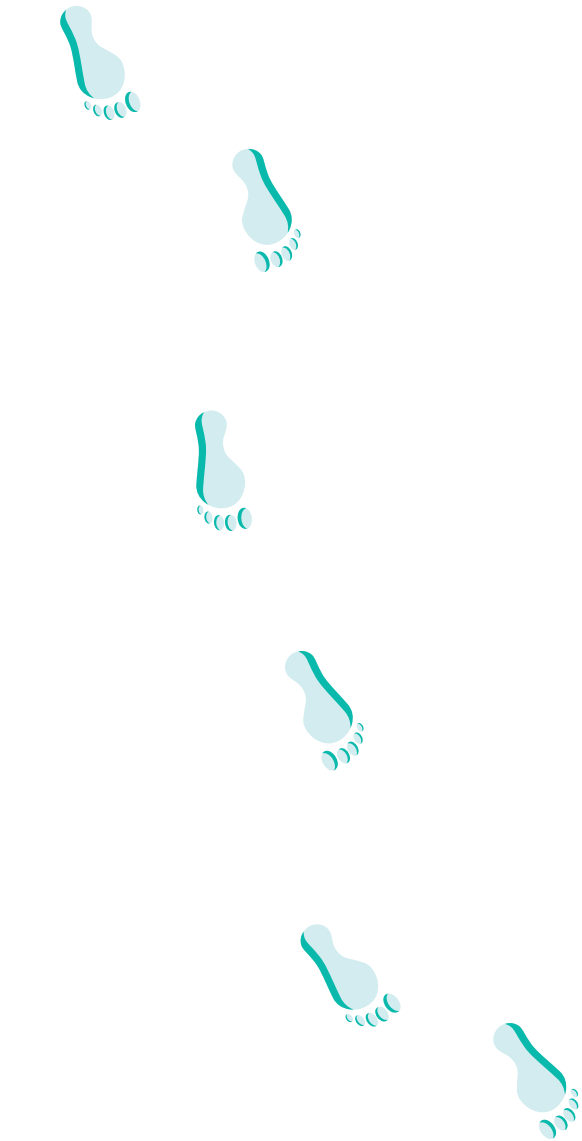
The school is also planning to enter a Purchase Power Agreement. This program is similar to offsets, but longer-term: Instead of incentivizing existing companies to offset or capture their carbon, SAIC would finance a new program to build a solar farm, wind farm, or other renewable resource from the ground up.

Other sustainability efforts are more abstract. Vasquez and Schaeffer both focus on similar questions: How can our art be more environmentally conscious in both process and content? What about the manufacturing and shipping of materials? The waste generated by unwanted projects?

The Sustainability Office is working with Dean of Undergraduate Studies to build these questions into the curriculum. Currently, Vasquez is the only full-time sustainability employee, but he said he would love for that to change. He emphasized that the more students demand green changes, the more power there is behind the movement.

This article is part of the F News Divestment Series. To read the other articles in the series, visit our website, news magazine.com/category/saic.

Changing the way students think, says Vasquez, is challenging.



From the Copper Mine to the Canvas

Tracing the life cycle of a tube of paint.

by Kristin Leigh Hofer

A **tube of paint** at your local art supply store. This is **Cerulean Blue Deep (C.B.D.)**. In her current form, C.B.D. is a sophisticated color inside a stylish tube. She's classy (series 4 at least). She's spirited (excellent lightfastness). She's mysterious (semi-opaque). She's basically Pantone's color of the year.

But this pile of paint wasn't always the sum of her parts.

Every paint's origin story begins with **pigment**, and C.B.D. is no different.

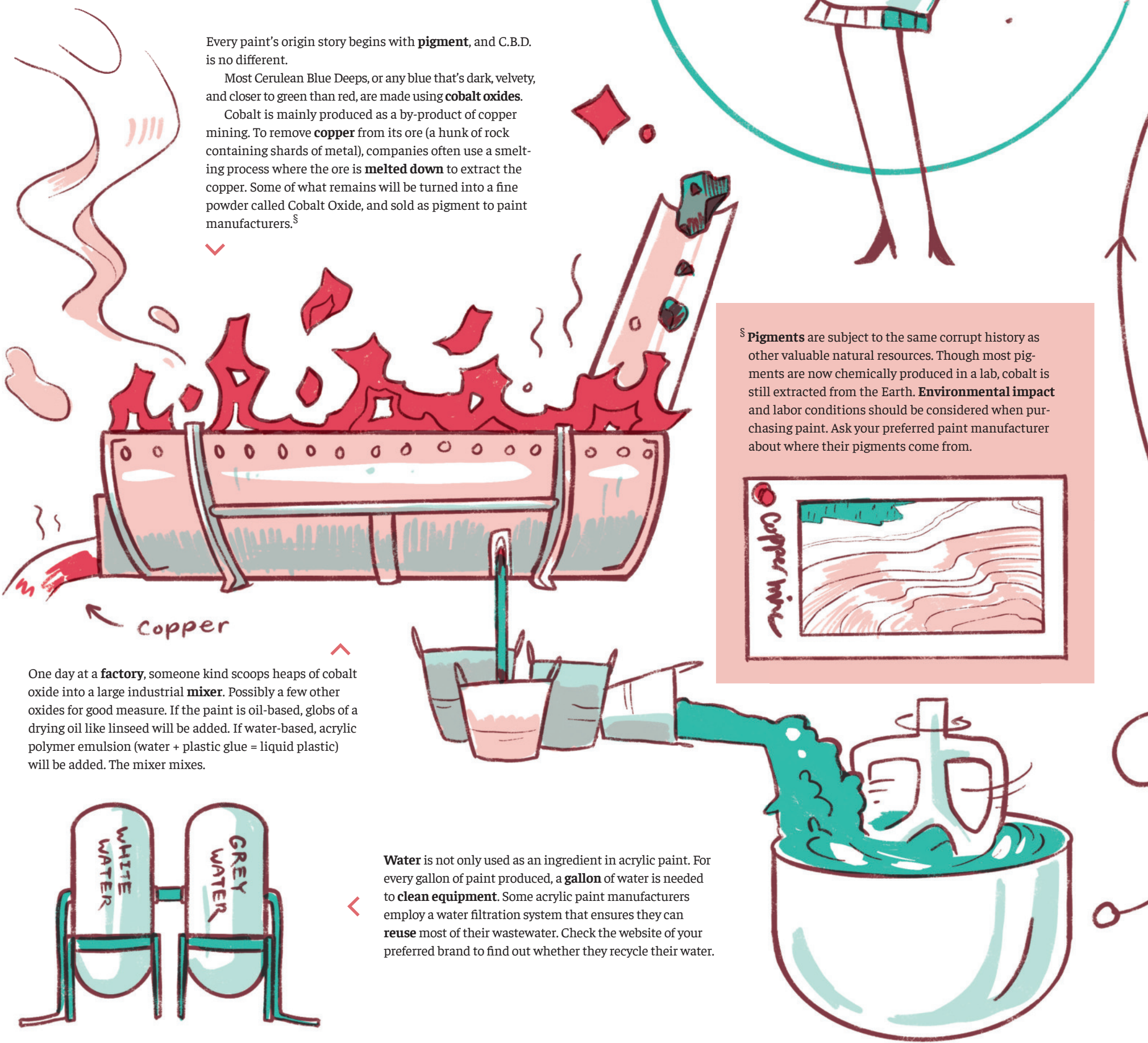
Most Cerulean Blue Deeps, or any blue that's dark, velvety, and closer to green than red, are made using **cobalt oxides**.

Cobalt is mainly produced as a by-product of copper mining. To remove **copper** from its ore (a hunk of rock containing shards of metal), companies often use a smelting process where the ore is **melted down** to extract the copper. Some of what remains will be turned into a fine powder called Cobalt Oxide, and sold as pigment to paint manufacturers.^{\$}

^{\$} **Pigments** are subject to the same corrupt history as other valuable natural resources. Though most pigments are now chemically produced in a lab, cobalt is still extracted from the Earth. **Environmental impact** and labor conditions should be considered when purchasing paint. Ask your preferred paint manufacturer about where their pigments come from.

One day at a **factory**, someone kind scoops heaps of cobalt oxide into a large industrial **mixer**. Possibly a few other oxides for good measure. If the paint is oil-based, globs of a drying oil like linseed will be added. If water-based, acrylic polymer emulsion (water + plastic glue = liquid plastic) will be added. The mixer mixes.

Water is not only used as an ingredient in acrylic paint. For every gallon of paint produced, a **gallon** of water is needed to **clean equipment**. Some acrylic paint manufacturers employ a water filtration system that ensures they can **reuse** most of their wastewater. Check the website of your preferred brand to find out whether they recycle their water.



A long time later, the **mixing** is done. A gentleperson transfers the lumpy blue paint to a **three-roll mill** that churns while paint is repeatedly **cycled** through. Or, it goes into a new mixer with a sharper blade that goes very fast. This is the toughest part of the process for C.B.D., but she takes beauty seriously — like Joan Crawford putting her face in a bowl of ice.

Aluminum tubes are made by machines that stretch small aluminum disks into cylinders. Then the inside is **sprayed** with **epoxy** to keep the aluminum separate from the product, and the outside is painted with a flexible, protective layer of paint.

Aluminum tubes are **recyclable** when empty! A **tube ringer** can help you use as much paint as possible. (Apparently, Amy Sillman cuts them open. C.B.D. prefers the tube ringer.)

Cerulean Blue Deep has **arrived**, and she's got somewhere to be (on your palette!). To get where she's going, her packaging is being rolled with **labels**. (She hopes they aren't too pedantic.) Then, she has to **squeeze** through mechanized udders into those svelte aluminum tubes.

Where is your paint made? Several fine paints manufacturers are located domestically, but many more are produced internationally. **Research** your preferred brand to find out how far your paint travels to get to you. **Hint:** closer is better.

She's tucked into a dark **box** and **shipped** to your local art supplier where someone with a sweet face will delicately place her amongst her comrades.

If you are able to spend more, consider purchasing the larger tube, or can, to **reduce packaging**. But make sure you'll use it: when not properly disposed, paint exposes harmful materials to the **environment**.
She knows you're on a budget, so she's patient. She's not picky about where she ends up, either. Figurative, abstract, conceptual — she respects every artist's **vision**. Just use her so she can arrive at the final stage of her life, the one with the most **glamour**. You'll scrape, brush, pour, or squeeze her onto a surface and the oil or the water that has kept her nimble will begin to evaporate. She'll harden. At last, paint will become **color**.

Kristin Leigh Hofer (BFA 2020) is a staff critic at F News who wants to talk about what you've been watching lately. Ask her about the best Pop Danthology.

SAIC SHOWS 2020

February

Post-Baccalaureate Annual

February 1–15

Reception: Friday, January 31
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Spaces With(in):

Master of Arts in Art Therapy and Counseling

February 1–15

Reception: Friday, January 31
6:00–8:00 p.m.

Panel and Film Screening:
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Toxic Relationships

Industrial plants in Chicago’s Southeast Side continue to endanger the community. Local activists are fighting to stop it.

by **Olivia Canny**

Steelworkers Park boasts a rock-climbing wall and lake-front walking paths now, but for most of the 20th century, it was filled with molten slag and a steel processing facility that employed over 20,000 domestic and immigrant workers. The park is one of several green spaces on Chicago’s Southeast Side, close to the Indiana border. It sits at the end of E 87th St. and the edge of Calumet Harbor, where the Calumet River snakes south from E 95th St., flanked by a variety of massive industrial facilities that line its sharp curve all the way to Lake Calumet, several blocks south. Industry saw Southeast Chicago’s river and railroads in the late 1800s, and put down roots that remain intact to this day, despite the city’s efforts to give the area a more “green” appearance

The neighborhoods surrounding Steelworkers Park are also home to a zealous community of environmental activists who blow the whistle when their corporate neighbors threaten the health of their neighborhood. Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF) began their fight in 1989 when activist and Chicago Public School teacher Marian Byrnes united 30 grassroots organizations in opposition to a steel-waste incinerator in Trumbull Park.

One of SETF’s more recent victories saw the permanent banning and removal of petroleum coke, also known as petcoke, a primarily carbon-based byproduct of oil refining processes. Oil companies in the United States and Canada sell petcoke to countries with fewer regulations on what substances they can burn for energy.

But petcoke’s mere presence in the United States can be harmful. Through much of the 2010s, heaping piles of the fine black dust lined the banks of the Calumet River in storage facilities on Chicago’s Southeast Side, spreading particulates and residue into the lungs of residents in neighboring communities. The main storage facility loomed within a few short blocks of John L. Marsh Elementary School.

SETF’s concerns got the attention of The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which found that the company’s manner of storing and transporting the petcoke was not in compliance with the Clean Air Act. The EPA issued two Notices of Violation to the facility, KCBX Terminals Company, pushing it to decommission one of its operations, which was located next to the 100th St. Bridge along the Calumet River. The company only complied after the second notice, almost one year after they were first notified.

KCBX is a division of Koch Industries, a massive oil conglomerate based in Kansas and owned by the Koch family, which has a combined wealth of \$124.5 billion, making them the sixth wealthiest family in the United States. The family’s history of commingling their oil refining pursuits with their political interests began when Fred Koch, father of current Koch Industries CEO Charles Koch, worked with the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Joseph Stalin paid Koch’s company — at the time called Winkler-Koch — \$500,000 to build 15 oil refineries and train Soviet engineers. In the years leading up to World War II, Winkler-Koch helped the Nazi regime build one of its largest oil refineries. On the postwar homefront, Fred Koch expressed his racist sentiments, supporting segregation in public schools and joining movements to expose “communist conspiracies” in the 1960s.

After Fred died, Charles and his late brother David took over the oil conglomerate and supported their libertarian political interests by funding think tanks that placed a scholarly veil over the deregulation of fossil fuel enterprises and tax cuts for their direct beneficiaries. According to research by veteran New Yorker writer Jane Mayer, the Koch brothers spent almost \$25 million on organizations that lead efforts to dispute climate reform.

The 20,000 residents who live within a mile of the facility are predominantly low-income Latino families.

Within Illinois, the Kochs maintain a relatively subdued political presence, but not without leaving a few traces of their involvement. In 2013, their company explored a bid to buy eight regional newspapers, including the Chicago Tribune. This would have supplemented their existing stronghold over the right-leaning Franklin News Foundation. In 2017, the brothers hosted a gathering for Republican politicians and potential policy donors, at which then-incumbent Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner made a stealthy appearance.

Roughly two years after SETF and the EPA succeeded in forcing KCBX to decommission their petcoke storage operations, on the Southeast Side The Chicago Tribune reported that air monitors in the neighborhood had detected concerning levels of manganese, a heavy metal that can cause memory loss, learning difficulties, anxiety, and damage to the nervous system. As manganese is linked to steelmaking processes, a new culprit emerged: S.H. Bell Co., a Pittsburgh-based metal manufacturer and distributor with a facility off of E 102nd St., also along the Calumet River. The 20,000 residents who live within a mile of the facility are predominantly low-income, Latino families.

S.H. Bell Co. has a history of operating without environmental permits and evading the state’s requests for pollution control. For years, the company refused to comply with Chicago’s regulations for bulk storage operators, whose presence is characterized by toxic substances that affect community members beyond the walls of industrial facilities. In Jan. 2017, Ohio EPA initiated a lawsuit against S.H. Bell Co. for failing to install air monitoring equipment that would inform the agency of whether or not the company threatened air quality in the surrounding area.

The city of Chicago and the EPA began taking action against S.H. Bell Co.’s toxic legacy at the beginning of last year, tightening regulations and initiating a \$1.3 million cleanup of contaminated soil on the Southeast Side. After testing soil levels of over one hundred homes along the Calumet River between E 100th St. and E 104th St., the EPA cleaned 15 homes with exceedingly high manganese levels, but did not receive enough federal funding to extend the cleanup to 35 other homes with slightly lower levels, and another 40 homes that tested positive for high levels of lead.

Like Steelworkers Park, manganese is a legacy of the steel industry and its influence on Southeast Chicago; but rather than celebrating the development brought by the community’s industrial workers, it hinders the development of the children that play in nearby parks today.

CAN'T
GET

NO

RELIEF

How disaster relief benefits the wealthy, and bypasses those who need it most.

by **Olivia Canny**

Why, despite societal advancements in technology and meteorological prediction methods, have developed countries' governments not come up with better systems for dealing with natural disasters, despite their increasing frequency and severity?

In the face of bushfires reaping monumental levels of damage, Australia faces a disaster aid crisis rooted in an outdated system, unadapted to the current severity of climate-related threats. The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), the country's main welfare management agency, is calling for drastic changes to the country's Disaster Recovery Repayment program, which distributes aid money to families in need throughout the country, but whose rates have not been updated since 2006. Uninsured and under-insured families who have lost their homes and belongings in the fire receive \$1,000 per household and \$400 per child; ACOSS is pushing for these rates to go up to \$3,000 per household and \$1,000 per child.

The failure of public policy to adequately address the disaster has led private citizens to take matters into their own hands. Australian comedian Celeste Barber used her massive social media following to share personal anecdotes about rampant bushfires, encouraging her followers to donate to the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, raising over \$28 million. Then, 20-year-old Instagram influencer Kaylen Ward — a.k.a. "THE NAKED PHILANTHROPIST" on Twitter — went viral in early January for using nude photos of herself to raise over \$1 million in donations to several groups working to mitigate the bushfire crisis. Ward, who hails from similarly fire-ravaged California, offered her followers one nude photo for each \$10 that they could prove they had donated to charities including the Australian Red Cross and the World Wide Fund for Nature.

If you are at or above the age of 18, you might be able to organize your awareness of global events through a timeline of major natural disasters. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina gripped the U.S. news media as over 1,200 people died in the wake of the storm and subsequent flooding. In 2011, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster followed an earthquake and tsunami off the coast of Japan, killing roughly 20,000 people, and the long term effects of radiation-related contamination remain a challenge both within the country and in other regions of the Pacific. In the 2010s

alone, global flooding and excessive rainfall rates grew by 50 percent, and sea levels rose almost 2 inches around the planet. As we've seen over the past several months, wildfires are more pervasive than ever, and the severity and reach of tornadoes have also escalated.

Aside from emphasizing the urgency of climate-related threats to civilization, natural disasters bring pressing socio-economic issues to light. It shouldn't come as any surprise that after disaster strikes and infrastructure crumbles, the wealthy flee the scene and the poor stay behind, often uninsured and facing graver consequences. High winds that accompany superstorms like hurricanes and tornadoes pose a greater threat to cheaper homes that lack adequate construction materials. Low-lying, flood-susceptible neighborhoods are often home to low-income communities, lacking defensive measures against flood damage.

Instagram influencer Kaylen Ward went viral in early January for using nude photos of herself to raise over \$1 million in donations for the Australian bushfire crisis.

Up until the end of the 18th century, governments responded to natural disasters with the "God's will" excuse, later realizing that their political reputation and national economic health rested upon how they wielded their power to address the subsequent destruction. Reconstruction efforts after an earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1755 marked the first state-organized response to an emergency of disastrous scale. In the U.S., Congress began adopting policies to alleviate taxes and distribute free land and public funds to disaster victims as early as 1803, but from the very beginning, these reparation efforts were primarily beneficial for wealthy property owners, a pattern that persists today.

The relief aid that we hope will mitigate losses after disasters might not be effective in the ways that victims need the most. A study by sociologists Junia Howell and James R. Elliott published in 2019 by Society for the Study of Social Problems found a correlation between the amount of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) aid received by U.S. counties and the

growth of the wealth gap between demographics that were already facing disparity. In essence, the current national system of disaster aid prioritizes private interests over public interests, which is only beneficial to individuals who hold private wealth, leaving those without facing the aftermath of disaster with less than they had to begin with. To quote the conclusion of the above study, "Natural hazards do not just bring damages, they also bring resources; and, equal aid is not equitable aid, especially when it is systemically designed to restore property rather than communities."

Needless to say, this inequity exists on a global scale, too. An investigative report by In These Times Magazine recently exposed the fate of the \$4.16 billion that the U.S. gave to Haiti for various relief efforts after a catastrophic earthquake in Jan. 2010. Roughly 10 years later, over 300,000 Haitians are either living in displacement camps or nearby slums without easy access to food, safe drinking water, and healthcare services; this is not because \$4.16 billion wasn't enough. Of the total aid money, the \$1.6 billion intended for "emergency humanitarian relief" did not touch any Haitian institutions, and a large fraction of it funded U.S military presence in Haiti.

Another \$1.14 billion meant for recovery efforts went instead towards debt cancellation owed to several global banks and financial lenders, including the U.S. Agency for International Development. Nearly \$50 million found its way into the development of an industrial park in an area of Haiti that the earthquake did not affect, where grossly underpaid workers assemble clothing for major brands based in the U.S., including Target, Gap, and Walmart.

While influencer efforts like Barber's, Ward's and their countless donors make a notable impact, they indicate a weakness in the organized efforts of countries and global powers to find comprehensive solutions to the escalating climate crisis. As much as we need global unity in the face of global disaster, we need governments that understand the immensity and long-term consequences of these events, and amend their reactions accordingly.



FOMO NOMO

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As fossil fuel divestment catches on, how do Chicago institutions stack up?

by **Dustin Lowman**

The top of renewable energy activist site GoFossilFree’s divestment page lists an impressive host of statistics: 1176 institutions divesting about \$12.02 trillion; 58,000 individuals divesting about \$5.2 billion. Below, a list of divested institutions displays a range of apparently divested groups, including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (~\$5 billion), the University of Glasgow (~\$261 million), and the Field Museum in Chicago (~\$435 million).

The Field Museum announced their divestment from fossil fuels in a rather unceremonious tweet back in 2015. The tweet came in response to a direct invocation from climate activist group 350 Chicago for the Field Museum to break its alliance with fossil fuel companies. Despite only netting four likes and two retweets, the missive had considerable impact, spawning a handful articles lauding the Field Museum’s ahead-of-the-curve endowment ethics.

The tweet was also sufficient to land the museum on GoFossilFree’s list of divested institutions, receiving a rating of “Full,” meaning “a binding commitment to divest (direct ownership, commingled mutual funds containing shares, corporate bonds or any asset classes) from any fossil fuel company (coal, oil, natural gas).” However, with the exception of a Field Museum spokesperson saying in 2016 that the institution had “divested from direct holdings in fossil fuels in 2015,” there is no public evidence beyond the tweet to suggest that divestment — let alone full divestment — has occurred.

Conspicuously, the Chicago Medical Society is the only other Chicago-based organization on GoFossilFree’s list of divested institutions. “Divesting from fossil fuel based companies” is listed as one of 17 resolutions passed during a February 2017 meeting, and is attributed to Dr. Peter Orris, M.D., MPH, chief of Occupational & Environmental

Medicine at UI Health. Dr. Orris is a vociferous champion of climate-based activism, and believes strongly in divestment’s potential for material impact.

“These resolutions from health and physician organizations say, “We think that coal is poisoning people, and it’s poisoning the planet,”” Dr. Orris told F in a phone interview. “It’s important for us to find ways to not be involved in that process. This action — combined with the fact that it’s a terrible investment — begins to change people’s attitudes.”

“The major economic forces, corporate forces, have agreed that climate change is a problem for their companies and economy as a whole. That’s a change in culture.”

Alex Holt, AIC’s executive vice president for finance and administration, challenges the idea that the quality of a fossil fuel investment has diminished. “Yes, if you look at the near-term returns, energy has underperformed,” she told F in an interview. “But if you look at the last ten years, energy as an individual sector has performed pretty close to other assets. Energy’s also an inflation hedge, so you want a little bit of energy in your portfolio.”

Trouble in Paradise

Dr. Orris likens fossil fuel divestment to tobacco industry divestment of the early 2000s. In both cases, there was an urgency for scientific organizations to divorce themselves from confirmed poisons, but obstacles made those clean breaks difficult.

“The fossil fuel industry is so large and so integrated that total divestment is somewhat aspirational,” Dr. Orris told us. “Tobacco was the same, the industry was so diversified, so ubiquitous. But by this time, investments are reduced considerably.”

Todd Kendall, vice president at economic consulting firm Compass Lexecon, illustrated exactly how challenging full divestment can be. “Let’s say you’re a limited partner at a private equity fund, and the fund invests in

a bunch of companies, one of which is a fossil fuel energy company,” he said during an interview with F. “You can’t just divest that one thing, you have to sell off the entire ownership of the equity fund. It may only be that fossil fuel stocks and/or assets are three percent of your portfolio. But if they’re commingled in private equity or mutual funds, you end up having to sell off like 80 percent of your assets.”

Indeed, New York City’s American Museum of Natural History, whose website — and, periodically, exhibits — educate viewers on how to fight climate change, was found to have had ties to Denham Capital, an international private equity firm whose portfolio includes fossil fuel investment. The revelation came through a leak of 13.4 million documents, affectionately termed the “Paradise Papers.” Per an NBC news analysis, Denham’s investments have included fracking, coal, and renewables.

The Field Museum did not respond to requests for comment about their divestment status. Knowing how challenging full divestment is, and in light of challenges similar institutions have faced, there is reason to take the Field Museum’s offhanded tweet with a grain of salt.

Phenomena like these make Kendall doubtful of divestment’s potential for impact. He compares it to “putting a bumper sticker on your car . . . It’s not really about doing anything, it’s about making a statement about who you are.”

Dr. Orris agrees that divestment is a largely symbolic activity, but argues for the importance of such symbolic activities. He notes the change in status quo in the science world vis-a-vis climate change. “In the 1980s, if we wanted somebody to do a lecture on climate change, you couldn’t find anybody to do it,” he said. “The major economic forces, corporate forces, have agreed that climate change is a problem for their companies and economy as a whole. That’s a change in culture.”

In view of the 97 percent of scientists who believe human activities drive climate change, scientific institutions like the Chicago Medical Society and the Field Museum face an extra urgency to divorce themselves from fossil fuels. Like a doctor prescribing cigarettes for nerve disorders, a fossil-fuel-allied scientific institution would be relinquishing its claim to scientific integrity.

Apparently, not so with AIC, a cultural institution. When asked if an investment — fossil fuel or otherwise — could ever be politically neutral, Alex Holt answered that it depended on your perspective. “If you view the investment as an income-generating tool, then yeah, I think it is politically neutral. But if you invest for social purposes, then no, absolutely not. Our endowment takes the view that it is politically neutral, that it is there to be politically neutral.”

This article is part of F Newsmagazine’s Divestment Series. For the full series, visit our website, fnewsmagazine.com and check out the SAIC section.





Spark Joy, Then Monetize It

How lifestyle brands promote an aesthetic of minimalism while encouraging more consumption.

by **Georgia Hampton**

Marie Kondo has had one hell of a decade. The queen of neatness became a household fixture for the organizationally challenged ever since the debut of her 2014 New York Times #1 bestselling book, “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up,” which encouraged its readers to discard anything that didn’t “spark joy” — a catchphrase that has become synonymous with the Marie Kondo (KonMari) brand. In the midst of a cultural moment that was both concerned with excess and endlessly producing it, Marie Kondo’s aggressive take on decluttering was a welcome slap in the face. Here was a method of tidying that hinged not on guilt, but on establishing a better, more sustainable, more joyful life. But recently, Kondo and her brand set an all-too-familiar trap that other lifestyle brands revel in: the life-changing magic of buying fancier things.

In 2019, Netflix debuted a reality series titled “Tidying Up With Marie Kondo,” in which a smiling Kondo helped a variety of people declutter their homes and, subsequently, their lives. Across media, Marie Kondo encouraged a lifestyle that aggressively rejected excess, but with a level of reverence that was rare. Kondo’s Netflix show struck a strong chord with clutter-prone viewers, people who usually would have scoffed at such detailed organizing.

“I didn’t get into the KonMari craze at all when it originally landed in book form,” confesses Estelle Tang in a piece about “Tidying Up” for Elle. “Yet as Kondo systematically helped her clients comb through forgotten

corners and cull excess, I did feel an itch to get up and do it myself.” I remember a friend of mine confessing to me, shocked, that she had begun folding all of her thongs after watching “Tidying Up.” All of them!

The popularity of Kondo’s book and show established an enormous sphere of influence around this particular brand of organization, called the KonMari Method. The KonMari Method was largely concerned with getting rid of items — asking yourself if any given item “sparks joy” in your life, and if it doesn’t, toss it. This is all to be done in a specific style: declutter by category, not location; do it all in one go, not in rounds; declutter first, organize second. The KonMari Method even has a specific way of folding that is meant to optimize the organization of your items and the ease with which you can access them. Following these simple rules was a way to train yourself to, as the KonMari website states, be more “mindful, introspective and forward-looking.”

Overall, the KonMari Method seems harmless. Will throwing out excess junk change every aspect of my life for the better? Unlikely, but it couldn’t hurt. The KonMari Method felt like a welcome change of pace from the ever-seductive pull of buying things, a lifestyle brand more concerned with overall happiness than the quick rush of accumulation. You didn’t even necessarily have to buy her book; searching for the KonMari Method on Google yielded everything you needed to know.



The Life-Changing Magic of Buying Fancier Things

Things changed in late 2019 when Marie Kondo opened KonMari.com, a Marie Kondo lifestyle website that included, among other things, a store. The page’s dropdown menu promised to offer items that “spark joy” for Kondo herself, items which will “enhance your everyday routine.” But this didn’t make sense. Wasn’t the KonMari Method all about getting rid of things, not buying new things? What was going on?

A quick browse through the KonMari store yielded a wide array of confusingly expensive items. Under the sub-category of “Tidying and Organization,” I found a “Small Wooden Tray” (\$119), a “Large Rattan Basket” (\$208) and, most confusing of all, a “Computer Brush” (\$35) that looked like it should be used to groom horses. The more I looked, the more bizarrely specific the items became. (What in the world is “Now Or Never Motivation Mist,” and why is it \$27?) And as I searched, the items for sale — and the KonMari brand itself — began feeling all too familiar.

Marie Kondo, her KonMari Method, and the new KonMari store are all aspects of a singular lifestyle brand — one that promises that a simple activity or product will lead to a better life. Lifestyle branding isn’t new; companies have been concocting the fantasy of elevated living for centuries. “Early lifestyle brands were gatekeepers that informed us of our stations in life and how to act within them,” writes Jasmine Bina in a piece for Medium.



What has changed over time is the balance of this relationship between consumer and lifestyle brand. “As a culture,” Bina continues, “we moved from interacting with brands as vehicles of self-labeling to vehicles of self-expression,” or even, as she adds later, “self-discovery.” There still existed the promise of clout, of belonging, but now the relationship between consumer and brand was treated as intrinsically personal, dictated largely by that individual’s self-expression and journey to empowerment through purchasing goods.

That isn’t necessarily all bad. Marie Kondo’s focus on the search for personal joy — that anything that doesn’t elicit pure happiness must be discarded — isn’t the worst philosophy to align yourself with. But even if a brand’s lifestyle message sounds great on paper, a lifestyle brand is still a brand. That means that it isn’t enough to adhere to the movement. To fully participate, you must purchase products that are advertised as the essential toolkit for an individual consumer’s personal growth.

Essentialism is also necessary for the pared-down aesthetic that KonMari encourages. The KonMari Method is first and foremost a movement to declutter, to create

a streamlined, minimalist environment of only the most joy-bringing items in your life. By virtue of that, the products for sale on KonMari must also adhere to this aesthetic — they’re simply designed, made from unbleached fabric and woven wood. They adhere to a color palette that favors gold, beige, and gray. Above all, these products must be necessary. That way, it might feel easier to click on “bath essentials” and find a “Linen Waffle Bath Towel” priced at \$74. Purchasing this item is presented as a way of adhering to the minimalist, intentional, ultimately consumerist lifestyle that KonMari promotes.

A “Healthy” Alternative

For consumers concerned with the impact their purchases have on the environment, a brand that advertises a message of intentional purchasing — of buying fewer, more utilitarian things — is a welcome option. Concern over the impact of clothing purchases, in particular, is certainly warranted; A 2018 Forbes article reported that the fashion industry produces 92 million tons of waste every year, 4% of the world’s yearly waste. A separate 2018 article in The New York Times revealed that the popular fast fashion brand H&M has generated a \$4.3 billion pile of unsold clothing.

At first, the popular lifestyle mantra of owning fewer, more precious things, sounds like a step in the right direction for individual consumers who want to avoid waste. But the very real preoccupation over sustainability and waste accumulation also opens the door for lifestyle brands that advertise their pared-down aesthetics as “clean,” “natural,” and even “sustainable” without defining their terms. Using these buzzwords situates brands alongside their target consumers — people concerned about the environment and their impact through consumerism — while still encouraging the purchasing of more goods.

Perhaps the most notorious example of this kind of lifestyle branding is Goop, the cosmetics company created by actress-turned-business-mogul Gwyneth Paltrow. Goop is particularly focused on “wellness,” which is confusingly similar to “lifestyle” but often concerns the body, sex, and health. Goop’s branding is similarly minimalist, though more colorful, and, like KonMari, it purports to be interested in intentional purchasing above all else.

“We believe every choice counts,” Goop declares on its About page. “We also believe in buying fewer things that are better, which is why we both make and curate incredible products, across beauty, fashion, wellness, and home.” Much like Marie Kondo’s assertion that we shouldn’t hold onto items we don’t absolutely love, this statement doesn’t sound half bad. Why wouldn’t I want to invest in a smaller, nicer collection of items rather than bloat my closet with things I won’t wear?

What in the world is “Now Or Never Motivation Mist,” and why is it \$27?



While these products attempt to suggest an ideal consumerist life — one in which each purchase is made intentionally — the purpose of these items isn’t utility at all. Their implicit worth lies in the lifestyle they are associated with. The elevated price is a component of a larger message: The consumer who purchases this item belongs to a certain class of people, both financially and spiritually. The item’s usefulness resides in the performance of usefulness. Recently, Goop released a candle — with notes of geranium, bergamont, and cedar — that Gwyneth Paltrow claims smells like her vagina. I doubt the candle truly smells like Paltrow’s vagina, but it doesn’t matter. The carefree, erotic message this object promotes is the real reason someone would buy it.

So, Does This Spark Joy?

Perhaps it is unsurprising that Marie Kondo launched her own lifestyle store, replete with the same kind of items found on Goop or any number of other lifestyle and wellness brands. The KonMari Method was even featured on Goop’s website, with a helpful series of images demonstrating the appropriate way to fold different kinds of clothing. But at the bottom of the webpage, I was encouraged to “shop the story” — six hyperlinks were waiting for me, offering an assortment of items ready for purchase (including an “Oro Champagne Gold Box” for \$70 and a “Maya Large Tideline Basket” for a whopping \$300).

While KonMari doesn’t offer items as provocative as a vagina-scented candle or a jade eggthe brand still promotes the same message of consumer-driven self-improvement as other companies. The existence of KonMari doesn’t necessarily devalue Marie Kondo’s method of tidying up, but it does complicate it. And for her fans, it will become increasingly important to recognize the hypocrisy in peddling a brand that treats both decluttering and consumerism as equally essential to a better life.

WHO'S ON THE BOARD

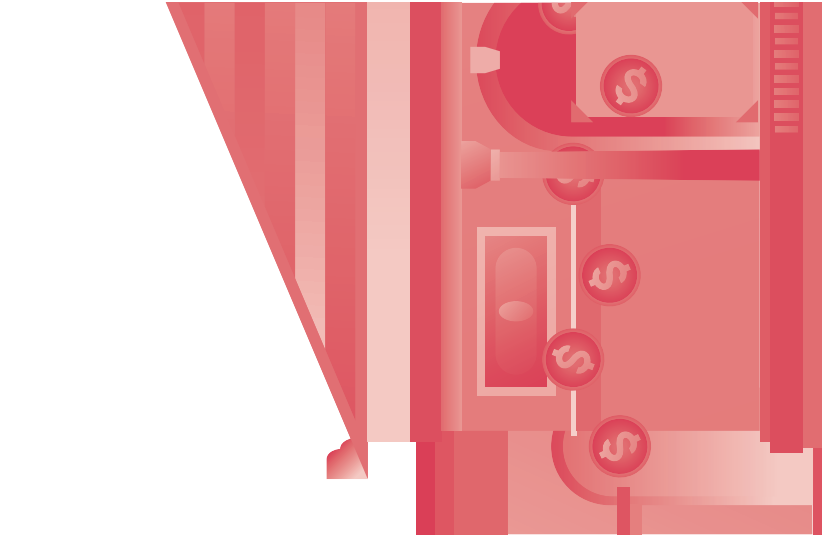
A who's who of the Art Institute's powerful board of trustees.

by **Dustin Lowman**

In an art museum, the board of trustees is the governing body responsible for big decisions. Board members are appointed based on being in a unique position to propel the organization in question. For museums like the Art Institute of Chicago (AIC), this could mean special artistic expertise, legal insight, political connections, or — more often than not — deep, deep pockets.

Among the big decisions the trustees have adjudicated is the organization's official stance on divestment. The AIC officially holds a non-divestment policy: “a strong presumption against divestment for social, moral, or political reasons.”

Upon learning that the board of trustees had absolute power to assess and decide on issues like divestment, we at F Newsmagazine realized that we didn't know much about who those trustees were. So, we looked into all 72 of them — who they are, what they do, how they made their bones. We sorted them by industry and singled out some especially compelling ones. For the full list of all 72 trustees, brief summaries included, find this article on our website, fnewsmagazine.com.



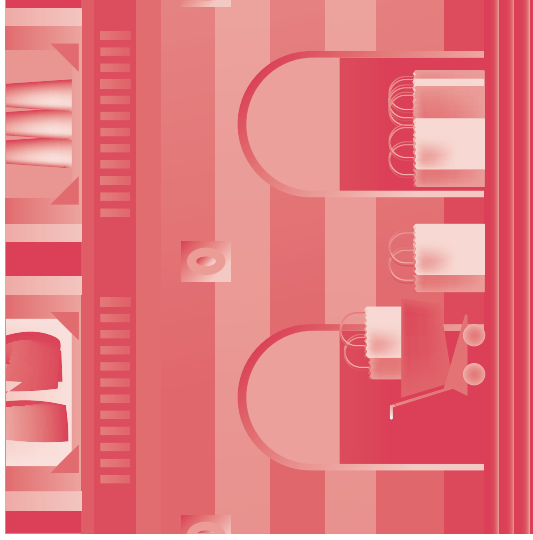
FINANCE

Money from money.
Investors, wealth managers, consultants, and insurance execs all fall into this category.

Researching the many mega-rich financiers on AIC's board, you can easily fall victim to “plutography,”

one of many Tom Wolfe-isms, meaning the fascination with the fanciful lifestyles of the obscenely wealthy. When money is no object, you're free to do things like fill a cellar with 2,700 bottles of wine, or convert the top floor of your apartment estate into an art gallery (**Robert Buford**).

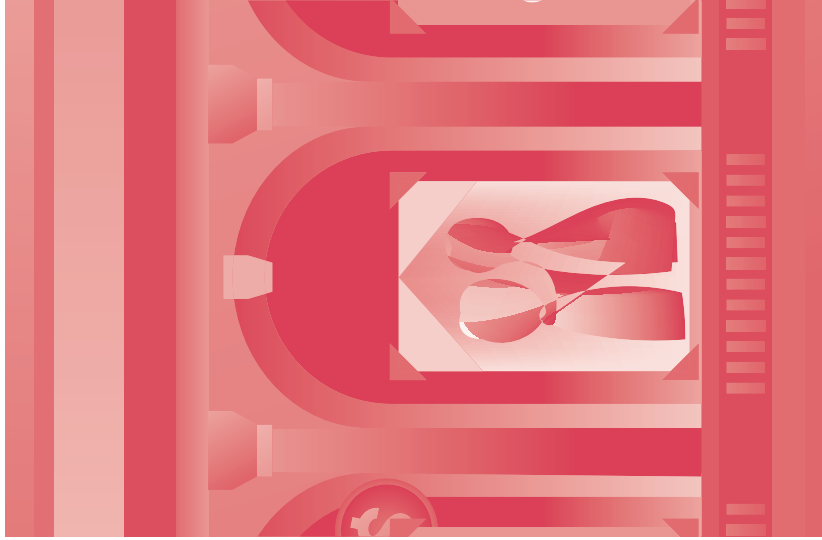
But beyond the wild and wacky is the disturbing — like **Kenneth C. Griffin**, a self-proclaimed “Reagan Republican” who believes money has “insufficient influence” on the electoral process, and who donated more than \$1 million to organizations supporting Rahm Emanuel. There's also **A. Steven Crown**, whose son Keating helms Sterling Bay, a real estate firm whose controversial developments threaten to permanently alter the Chicago cityscape.



RETAIL/ INDUSTRY

Money from things.
Manufacturers, hoteliers, steelmakers, packaging distributors, and similar positions fall into this category.

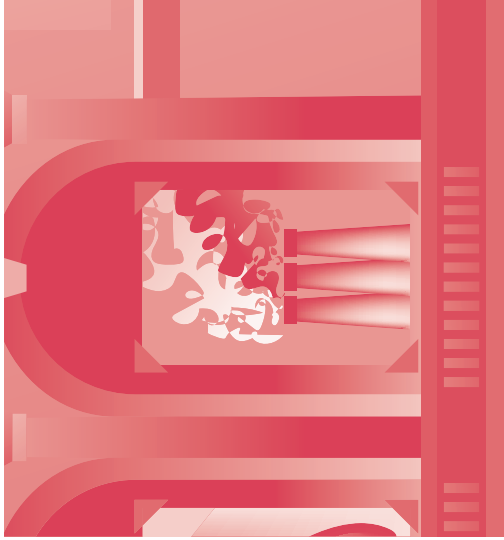
In 1962, **Gordon Segal** borrowed \$17,000 to open Crate & Barrel in Chicago's Old Town. Over the next half-century, the company exploded, and Segal incrementally sold his stake in the company for an eventual total of \$500 million. In 2019, C&B's four-story North Michigan Avenue location closed to make way for mega-Starbucks.



ARTS

Money (or status) from art.
Artists and collectors.

In 1983, **Ellen Sandor** formed (art)[®], a collaborative group responsible for PHSColograms (pronounced skol-o-grams), an art form which seeks to combine photography, holography, sculpture, and computer graphics. She holds an MFA (Sculpture; 1975) and an honorary doctorate (2014) from SAIC. Her husband Richard is a famous economist and entrepreneur.



OTHER

GRAND TOTALS

72 TRUSTEES



Illustration by Raven Mo

LAW

Money from practicing law.
Attorneys fit in here.

In addition to serving on AIC’s board of trustees, **Sylvia M. Neil** is all over Chicago boards, serving on the boards of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago Public Media, Chicago High School for the Arts, and is a life trustee of the Grand Teton Music Festival. She is also chair-elect of the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

PHARMA

Money from meds.

Anne Searle Bent descends from Gideon Daniel Searle who, in 1888, founded G.D. Searle & Co. in Omaha, NE. After relocating to Chicago, the company would develop Dramamine, Nutrasweet, and the first contraceptive pill. From 1977 to 1985, none other than Donald Rumsfeld served as G.D. Searle & Co.’s CEO.

ENERGY

Money from power.
Both fossil fuels and
sustainables included.

Michael Polsky is the founder of Invenergy, which purchases and develops sustainable energy operations. They own 150 solar, wind, natural gas, and energy storage projects on four continents, supplying a total of 24,100 megawatts of power. For reference, one megawatt can power 1,000 homes.

THINGS WE LEARNED

Money makes the (art) world go round. It should come as no surprise that the financial world is so disproportionately represented — while becoming a trustee does not always require limitless wealth, it certainly helps. Art and commerce, while seemingly at opposite ends of the cultural spectrum, have long been bedfellows. Though, one must wonder, if the stated purpose of the trustees is to remain “responsible and vital to those it serves,” does it make sense to have 11 times as many financiers as artists on the board?

- **Artless.** Of the 72 trustees we looked at, only one (Ellen Sandor) is an artist (new media), and she is married to a very wealthy businessman. This is attributable to the often high price tag of board membership, and that while there’s a lot of money in the art world, not a lot of it belongs to the artists themselves.

Some trustees were harder to categorize, or to find.

Anita Blanchard, an OBGYN at UChicago Medicine, delivered both Sasha and Malia Obama, and is one of Michelle Obama’s closest friends. Blanchard is also on the Committee for the Preservation of the White House (2013) and the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (2011).

A few trustees escaped us, despite deep Googling, we were unable to find anything about them.

Dustin Lowman (MFAW 2020) is the SAIC editor at F News magazine. In 2020, he would like to see a cardigan elected president.

Remapping the Rural



In the work of artist Allison Janae Hamilton, land and rural life are places of fantasy and urgency

by **Kaitlin Weed**

Two stuffed alligators on the floor bend themselves in perfect circles to eat their own tails, ouroboros-like. In the video “FLORIDALAND,” playing in a different part of the gallery, the artist, Allison Janae Hamilton, rides a horse in a flowing tank top and a bird skull mask. On an adjacent screen, her mother, in a gothic blouse and feathered mask, walks through an open field carrying a slaughtered pheasant.

Allison Janae Hamilton’s work is driven by fantasy and relationships to the land. It captures the viewer in a world that feels familiar yet unplaceable. Her art spans across mediums, from photography, performance, and sound to video and fashion. Her solo exhibit, “Pitch,” was on view at MASS MoCA from March 2018 - 2019. She resides in New York City, but her roots are pastoral.

Born in Kentucky, Hamilton and her family eventually moved to Florida: first to Miami, then to rural Tallahassee. This location significantly influences her work, which draws on both the ecology and the culture of northern Florida. Her upbringing kept her knitted to the land, nurturing her respect and appreciation for nature. Her family has hunted for generations, which give them a distinct relationship to sustainability and food that others might take for granted. Hamilton inherited her name from her great-grandmother, a skilled markswoman, who passed on her skills to her daughters.

Nature, for Hamilton, is a bridge between the past, the present, and the future. The land, an active protagonist in her art, is the best storyteller. Through it, history becomes tangible. In an installation at MASS MoCA, pine trunks (ethically sourced) dangled from the ceiling, their odor wafting through the space. Plywood pieces, painted with a thin, chalky coat of paint, lean against the wall. On one, the word “mother” repeats over and over.

Through this installation, Hamilton investigates Florida’s once-booming turpentine industry, which devastated

both the land and its inhabitants. Once the second largest leading industry for Florida, resin, also called “pitch,” was harvested from the pines in order to create turpentine. Turpentine was once used on ships, musical instruments, and soap. Turpentine today is most familiar as a paint thinner for oil painting. Large turpentine companies would exploit isolated workers in rural camps, where they had no choice but to rely on scrip and company stores. About 10% of these workers were convicts performing forced labor. As part of her research, Hamilton began to explore these abandoned camps. By examining this history, her exhibit dissects the commodification of people and the environment.

Especially now, as climate change is increasing and people of color are more likely to be on the front lines of the climate crisis, Hamilton’s work feels even more

Nature, for Hamilton, is a bridge between the past, the present, and the future.

important. The 2014 National Climate Assessment found that rural Americans will face additional challenges linked to climate change, from isolation to aging populations. Rural life is changing irrevocably as the growing season shifts, with winter becoming shorter and summer longer. Just as the environment serves as the main character in Hamilton’s work, nature is the protagonist for those who live in the thick of it.

As Hamilton told the New York Times, her grandmother could “tell you everything about climate change.” Centering the voices of people of color is particularly important



because rural Americans are so often depicted as white and conservative. In an interview with Creative Independent, Hamilton said, “Post-migration, there are still tons and tons of African-American folks living in the South, in the rural parts of the South, too. But the way these kind of discourses are organized and structured really leaves a lot of people out, I think. There are still so many stories, so many kinds of experiences, that people still don’t know anything about. I feel both obligated and honored to try and tell them.”

Hurricanes have also played into Hamilton’s work. Some of her work deals with the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926 and the Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928. These hurricanes killed thousands of black migrant workers, who were buried unceremoniously in unmarked graves.

Drawing on the lyrics of Judge Jackson’s 1928 hymn “Florida Song,” which deals with the Great Miami Hurricane, Hamilton created “The people cried mercy in the storm.” The installation at MASS MoCA consists of an enormous tower of white tambourines nestled by a picturesque pond. In “Epos: Soundscape of a Thousand,” a sound performance, a group of musicians sang around the sculpture in honor of those who lost their lives in the Okeechobee Hurricane. As Hamilton told The New York Times, “My concern is which communities are more vulnerable, which ones are given the least care, which ones are always on the wrong side of the levee; and how that relates to the history of power, and of the country.”

Top: Installation view of Allison Janae Hamilton: Pitch at MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA Bow Photo credit: David Dashiell
Bottom: Allison Janae Hamilton, Brecencia and Pheasant II. 2018. Photo courtesy of the artist

CANCELLING

Wilderness

The first step towards preserving our wilderness is expanding our definition of it.

by **Mike Sockol**

In 1996, then-President Bill Clinton traveled to Utah to designate Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument a protected site. Clinton dedicated over 1.35 million acres to this new National Monument, thus ensuring its safety from exploitation. At the time, this was a positive step toward environmental protection. But it also came to demonstrate the utter insufficiency of land protection that hinges on the concept of wilderness.

In 2018, then-Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke reviewed 27 National Monuments, putting all 27 up for executive review. The Trump Administration decided to reduce the amount of protected land at Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Bears Ears National Monument from the 1.35 million acres set aside by Bill Clinton to a mere 200,000 acres. As Julia Turkewitz reported in The New York Times, this all occurred against the lobbying efforts made by the Hopi and Navajo nations in 2016. “We will stand and fight it all the way,” said Russell Begaye, president of the Navajo Nation. The U.S. government, he added, had already taken “millions of acres of my people’s land.”

How is it that such a radical reduction of protected land can occur in a nation that claims to pride itself on its traditions of environmentalism? A possible explanation is that what drives these protection efforts is our flawed concept of wilderness, rather than ecologically-oriented preservation or environmental justice. What we deem sites of spectacular, pristine wilderness are actually historically situated and rather arbitrary. As preservationist and political science professor William Chaloupka said in a polemic essay written just before Clinton’s designation in 1995, “Wilderness is more of a feeling than a specific location.” Even when it is a place, it is always “over there.” By understanding wilderness this way, we produce a dichotomy between lived environments “here” and wilderness environments “over there.” This conception of wilderness is constituted, in part, through what is not wilderness — much in the same way that free time is constituted through unfree time.

This opposition has an immense impact on land management in the United States. Despite the efforts of environmental activists, authors, artists, ecologists, and didactic naturalists, this conception of wilderness prevails. National Park attendance since 1916 has increased steadily every year, going from around 350,000 visitors in 1916 to an estimated 330,000,000 in 2017. But the popularity of the National Parks is not what is worthy of criticism; rather, it is that conception of wilderness which relegates and localizes what is to be revered and protected, creating a dialectic — two opposing and contradictory forces — between nature and society. In this dialectic, the lived environment is where people work. Easily recognizable as a city or farm, it can also be a mine, an oil rig in the Gulf of

Mexico, and so on. It is the dull arena of the laboring subject alienated from nature — even if the subject engages with it. Standing in opposition to these places is wilderness, which is uninhabited and, well, wild. Wilderness can reestablish or refresh the laboring subject’s connection with nature, something that non-wilderness environments supposedly strip from them. People go to the wilderness to feel rejuvenated because the marks of human activity are hidden and obscured.

There is a decidedly political dimension to the demystification of wilderness, to demonstrating that wilderness is not a pristine, external authority, but always already connected to us. Othering wilderness erases the humans already living there and sets expectations for what is worthy of appreciation and legal protection. This thinking limits where wilderness can exist. Such a conception permits environmental degradation “here” at home, so long as we have fragments of a pristine wilderness out “there” to escape to once in a while.

Wilderness is not a pristine, external authority, but always already connected to us.

One outcome of this conception of wilderness is habitat fragmentation, which is a leading cause in the severe reduction in biodiversity in forests. Habitat fragmentation is the result of a larger expanse of habitat being broken into smaller, isolated sections, between which logging, drilling, and mining all occur. Habitat fragmentation in the Amazon rainforest has weakened the tree canopy’s ability to maintain and recycle moisture and also creates “edge effects,” the ecological term to describe the shifting dynamics at the edges of ecosystems which have radically destabilizing effects. More habitat fragmentation means more edges of habitats, which means less stability and diversity.

Treating wilderness this way reserves the designation for only the romantic and spectacular sites familiar to the environmental imagination. When the Trump Administration drastically reduced protected land at the National Monument in Utah, it strategically left protected only the most popular sites associated with these wilderness areas, like the peaks of Bears Ears rock formations, leaving them stranded as islands of “protected” wilderness systematically disconnected from the surrounding forests. By allowing the wilderness sites of the environmental imagination to remain shielded from industry, nefarious land management organizations can use the connecting forests and wildlife

areas for extraction and drilling.

This happened at Mt. St. Helen’s in the late 1980s, and it’s happening again at Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, where 19 leases for mining and drilling the newly opened land have already been filed.

There is an urgent need to do as ecologists and indigenous activists suggest: network the environment. Wilderness areas must be networked together, forming ecosystemic barriers that allow wildlife to migrate and adapt. For example, the Illinois Forest Preserves, which contiguously run along the Des Plaines River, could be combined with wildlife bridges, which allow migrating wildlife to cross human barriers like roads and bridges safely — something Colorado has already implemented. Another tactic is restoring riparian vegetation systems, which are plant-heavy habitats along the edges of rivers and streams. These provide continuous protection from storms, ecological isolation, habitat fragmentation, and other threats. It uses boundaries like rivers to connect ecosystems, keeping them healthier and able to adapt, which is especially urgent during rapidly changing climate. As restorationist Thomas Lovejoy put it, “Protection without connection is insufficient.” It’s time to cancel “wilderness” and start demanding environmental protection and justice that extends beyond isolated and fragmented areas.

At no point do we ever cross a line and enter wilderness. It is a gradual process, unnoticeable even, until the moment we find ourselves feeling like we are in “the wilderness.” It is so gradual and indistinct because it never really begins or ends. The oaks and maples lining the streets of Chicago, or the bacteria in your gut, are part of the wilderness that surges around us. It’s time to free wilderness from its dangerous isolation and open it up so that wilderness is experienced — and protected — everywhere.

BP Biennial

Does a biennial about decolonization and climate crisis cancel itself out if it's funded by BP?

by **Leah Gallant**

I went to the BP Biennial, and I liked it.

The BP Biennial is adored by critics everywhere for its devotion to themes of social justice, land rights, and environmental activism.

In the BP Biennial, you will find plywood forms, Samsung monitors, and the staccato repetition of the word “decolonization.”

The logo of BP is like a star bursting, or a chrysanthemum, or the top of the dome of the building in which the Biennial is held.

This logo dates from British Petroleum's efforts, starting around 2000, to rebrand itself as greener: by changing its logo from a shield to a flower, and by renaming itself Beyond Petroleum.

At times, the BP Biennial recognizes itself directly.

For example, the BP Biennial hosts a panel discussion about corporate funding in the arts.

“BP Biennial,” I thought, when I saw that the Chicago Architecture Biennial was sponsored by BP and Exelon.

But the BP Biennial is much bigger than that.

The BP Biennial is an allegory for any biennial anywhere.

The BP Biennial is a typical example of the social and economic world (the economic is always also social) of contemporary art.

The BP Biennial is, among other things, true.



The BP Biennial is sponsored by BP, but it could just as easily be sponsored by Purdue Pharma, PNC Bank, or Shell.

The BP Biennial was in Chicago, just as the Tear Gas Biennial was in New York.

“The art world imagines itself as a limited sphere of intellectual and aesthetic inquiry, where what matters, first and foremost, are inclusion, representation, and discussion. This ignores art's ongoing transformation into yet another arm of the culture industry, for which, as in other industries, the matters of chief importance are production and circulation,” write Hannah Black, Ciarán Finlayson, and Tobi Haslett in “The Tear Gas Biennial,” their July 2019 column for Artforum.

They are writing in support of the protests against the titular Biennial, which called for the resignation of Whitney vice-chairman Warren Kanders, CEO of a company that manufactures the tear gas used, among other places, against refugees at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Safariland, Kanders's company, also supplies batons, body armor, and handcuffs to the New York Police Department and the Israel Defense Forces.

The writers advocate for a boycott.

They question the fact that only one artist withdrew work outright from the Biennial, and only two thirds signed a statement asking for Kanders's resignation.

“There are moments when the disembodied, declarative politics of art are forced into an encounter with real politics, i.e. with violence,” Black et. al write.

Warren B. Kanders is gone now. He has resigned.

But a Biennial is an event that happens every two years.

The Biennial is a form that always comes back.



The Biennial is a type of event with global importance and global participation, in more ways than one.

The Biennial brings together curators and artists from all over the world with resource extraction that happens all over the world.

The Biennial is always already happening in the occupied territories, always already in every neighborhood in New York, always already in the eyes of refugees along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The BP Biennial expands the idea of where contemporary art and architecture can be.

The BP Biennial has one central exhibition, but it also has many satellite locations.

One of these satellite locations is West Papua.

The BP Biennial has operated for decades in West Papua, where the U.S.-backed Indonesian occupation has killed 500,000 Papuans.

Journalists are not allowed there, but maybe curators are.

Another satellite location is the Gulf of Mexico.

In 2010, more than 200 million gallons of the BP Biennial spewed into the Gulf of Mexico, creating the largest oil painting in the history of the ocean.

The painting was so big that it covered 68,000 square miles of ocean, about the size of Nebraska.

Another satellite location is your lungs, and another, your pockets.



The BP Biennial seems to raise the question of whether to accept the dark corporate funding, yay or nay.

But the architecture of this question, its internal grammar, is incorrect.

And so to answer it, yay or nay, is to answer it incorrectly.

That is because the BP Biennial has a name that is intentionally misleading.

The more accurate title of the BP Biennial is the Corporate Tax Break Biennial.

The Corporate Tax Break Biennial is funded by taxpayers.

If you paid taxes, you were part of the team behind the Biennial: so thank you.



I went to the BP Biennial, and I went cross-eyed in trying to read two contradictory texts about what is true and what is right.

I think there is a difference between what is true and what is right, but I don't know what.

I went cross-eyed trying to read the land acknowledgement at the same time as I read its list of corporate sponsors.

I think there is a difference between goodness and morality, but I don't know what.

I went cross-eyed trying to stare down my own complicity, my own self-superiority, my own inseparability from the functioning of the BP Biennial.

I went cross-eyed trying to tease apart the twinned experiences of hope and horror that the BP Biennial engendered in me.

I think I am supposed to understand the art on display as morally distinct from, and aesthetically and conceptually unsullied by, the funding structure that allows it.

I think only for an artist with enough social standing in the art world is refusing inclusion in a BP Biennial an easy decision.

I think this text is far less ironic than your average wall text.

I think this text must contradict itself in order for it to be honest.

I think the BP Biennial is beyond the normative reach of art criticism, in the way that the hidden pulley of the curtain is beyond the reach of the theater critic.

I think reporting on the ongoing efforts of BP or Not BP, the British activist group calling for cultural institutions to stop accepting funding from the corporation, must be forced into the realm of the theater review.

I think boycott and other forms of clear-cut refusal must always remain options on the table.

I think the BP Biennial is a pure, honest, and unremarkable model of how cultural production happens in the United States of America.

The purpose of this review is not to malign the curators or the project or to declare my own moral superiority: I who write you from a device of lithium and rare earth.

The purpose is to state clearly the foundations and boundaries of social critique, then to ask what avenues of social and creative possibility might trespass nonstop through them.

The purpose is to ask how to understand art as always itself, its possibly woke self, and also always part of the violence that it seeks to address.

I think art must become synonymous with violence, and criticism must become synonymous with muckraking.

I think the art section of each newspaper must be collapsed into the business section, just as the white cube must be collapsed into the place where the oil seeps and darkens.



GREEN DEAL OR NO DEAL?

The Green New Deal is the most comprehensive plan to face climate change, so far. So what’s in it?

by **Leo Smith**

WHAT is the Green New Deal?

It is a congressional resolution to form a plan to respond to both climate change and economic inequality in one massive spending package. The name, and the plan, are inspired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal,” a series of federal programs between 1933 and 1939 intended to help raise the U.S. out of the Great Depression.

If the resolution is adopted by Congress, a series of Green New Deal plans would follow. Per the resolution, the plans would be for sustainable, environmentally responsible infrastructure and jobs. Job training would be in clean industries, green infrastructure, and non-fossil-fuel-based energy sources. Efforts would focus particularly in communities affected by climate change, former industrial or farming areas that are now depressed, and other low-income areas.

The Green New Deal, in its current iteration, is not a law or federal spending package. It is currently a resolution which, if passed, would represent congressional commitment to making such a plan.

WHEN did it begin?

One week after 2018 midterms, protesters from Sunrise Movement youth activist group held a sit-in outside Pelosi’s new office; following this, freshman Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York’s 14th District launched a resolution to create a committee on the Green New Deal.

WHO supports it?

Other early supporters included Representatives Deb Haaland, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, Antonio Delgado, John Lewis, and José Serrano. Today, 15 senators support it, and over 90 congresspeople, primarily Democrats.

The resolution is also supported by activist groups including 350.org, Greenpeace, Sierra Club, Extinction Rebellion, and Friends of the Earth.

Of the 2020 presidential candidates, all major Democratic hopefuls support a Green New Deal. President Donald Trump, along with most Republican politicians, does not.

WHERE would it take effect?

From sea to shining sea.

The resolution is “recognizing the duty of the federal gov to create a green new deal.” Here’s what that plan should entail:

Achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers

Invest in the infrastructure and industry of the United States to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century

Create millions of good, high-wage jobs and ensure prosperity and economic security for all people of the United States

Secure for all people of the United States for generations to come:

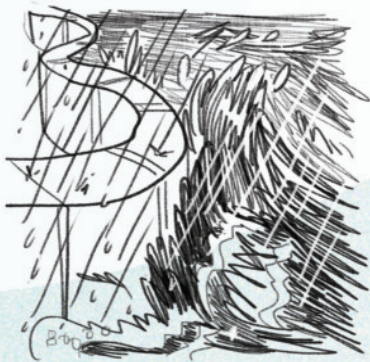
- clean air and water
- climate and community resiliency
- healthy food
- access to nature
- a sustainable environment

...Over the course of 10 years.

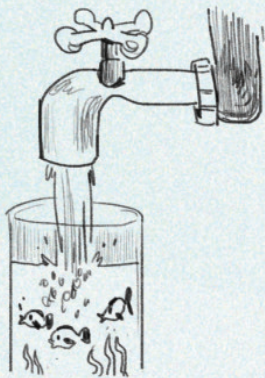
And promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

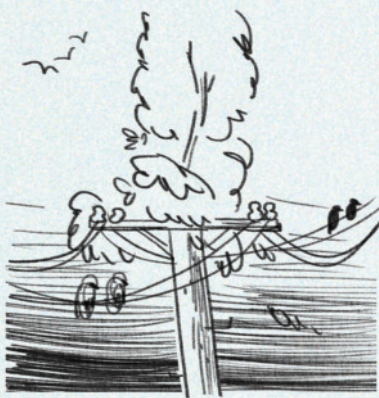
Sen. Ed Markey



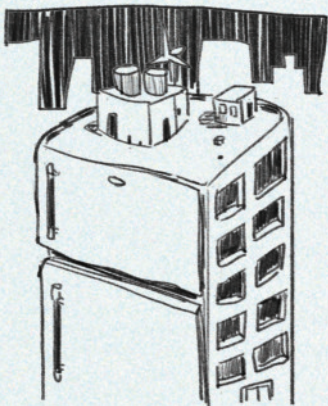
1. Infrastructure to protect against climate



change-related disasters, such as extreme weather.



2. Clean water, reduce pollution
3. 100% clean energy grid, upgraded to be efficient and monitored by



smart tech, and affordable for all.
4. Upgrading all buildings



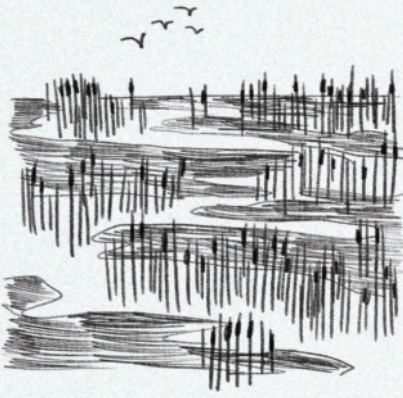
to be heat & energy efficient.
5. Removing pollution and emissions from manufacturing and industry as much as is technologically feasible, including by expanding renewable energy manufacturing and investing in existing



manufacturing and industry.
6. Working collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to remove pollution and emissions from the agricultural sector as



much as is technologically feasible.
7. Remove pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation



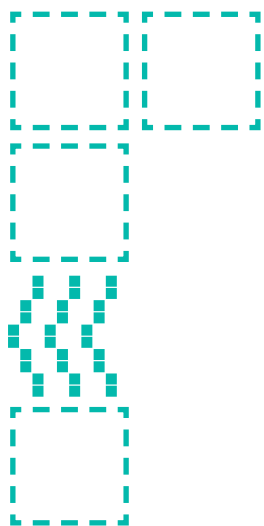
sector as much as is technologically feasible.
8. Restoring natural ecosys-

tems that remove carbon from the atmosphere.
To read the full resolution, you can visit <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>

SO?

Passing this resolution is the first step to the plan becoming a plan, which would then be voted on and passed. If you support this, tell your senator and congressperson to vote in favor, and make sure your presidential candidate of choice supports it.

The Untranslatable



On words that can't move between languages.

by **Angelica Ong**

“Eating here or 打包?”

“I’m craving *nasi goreng* ².”

“Ugh, I have to OT today. Friggin’ *sian* ³.”

Such is the common parlance back home in Singapore. A hodgepodge of English, Chinese, Malay and Hokkien (which is commonly referred to as “Singlish”), most Singaporeans (myself included) often insert words from other languages in daily conversations. We aren’t necessarily fluent speakers of all of the languages used in Singlish, but in Singapore’s multilingual environment, there are so many languages in the air that you’re bound to pick up a couple of words here and there.

Even when a sentence is predominantly in English, we often pull words from other languages for two main reasons: convenience, or because there is simply no equivalent in English. For instance, by saying “*nasi goreng*” rather than “fried rice,” we simultaneously communicate that we are referring specifically to Malay fried rice. “*Sian*,” on the other hand, is a singular word expressing an emotion that takes a phrase to convey (and not comprehensively at that) in English. Switching back and forth between languages happens intuitively amidst an environment with similarly multilingual individuals. Thus, for a long time, I was largely able to evade the problems that came with translation (or mistranslation).

However, once I embarked on my 6-year journey studying Japanese, I was finally forced to confront head-on the mess that was translation. From the get-go, I found that studying a language is vastly different from acquiring one, where the learning of the language happens systematically and analytically rather than organically and subconsciously. In attempting to understand an entirely foreign language, I kept trying to find equivalents. I instinctively felt compelled to relate it to something familiar: the languages that I already knew. I was constantly looking up translations to a host of new words and phrases, most frequently through translation machines — and more often than not these translations were more mystifying than clarifying. In many cases, multiple words and phrases were translated into the same word, or only one definition of the word would be translated, completely overlooking the numerous other definitions the words possess; the different nuances and usage of the words were often lost somewhere in between.

For instance, “～ました (*mashi da*)” and “～より良い (*yorii yoi*)” would both translate to something being the better option of the two; however, “～ました” is more nuanced — it also suggests that neither of the two options is particularly desirable, and the chosen option is not so much the “better” option as it is the “less bad” option. Words like “見る (*miru*)” would often be explained only as “to see,” when it could also mean “to look after,” “to view (something)

as,” among other translations. Possibly, this lies in the fact that the Japanese language relies heavily on context. The act of translation involves extracting words from their context and thus goes entirely against the operations of the language, and often eliminates the nuances that are so critical to and emblematic of the language.

It was not just the vocabulary; I also found myself constantly trying to translate grammar and sentence patterns. “What is the equivalent of ‘です’ in English?” (There isn’t one.) “Does ‘は’ translate to is/are/am?” (It does not.) I felt an incessant need to find parallels between the languages, as that seemed the only way I could come to comprehend what I was learning. It took a while for me to understand that there really is no way to ever perfectly match, word-for-word, sentences that are in completely different languages. Certainly, the key points are there; however, their emphasis, tones and exact expressions were not the same.

As I became increasingly acquainted with Japanese, I discovered ever more words and aspects of it that are simply “untranslatable.” For instance, there are words that exist only in Japanese, such as “木漏れ日 (*komorebi*),” the dappled sunlight that filters through trees; “青葉雨 (*aoba ame*),” rain that renders the green leaves of early summer glossy and lustrous; and “物の哀れ (*mono no aware*)” the awareness of the impermanence of things, to name a few. When translated into English, what was just one word often balloons into a lengthy phrase that may not even communicate the full meaning of the word. In addition, there are multiple forms within the Japanese language, and each conveys varying degrees of formality, the most formal one being “敬語 (*keigo*),” the honorific form. However, these changes in form that are so stark and apparent in Japanese are often eliminated once translated to English. Unlike in English where a change in tone involves using a discrete set of vocabulary, in Japanese it involves conjugation, which is effectively eradicated in translation.

I often encountered these problems while working as a freelance Japanese-to-English translator. As such, I was always wrestling with the decision to translate word-for-word, or what the text implied. I wanted readers to be able to appreciate the unique phrases and idioms, and come to understand the text via their own interpretations; yet, at the same time, I feared there would be misinterpretation.

¹Read as “dǎ bāo” in Chinese, which means “to pack” or “takeout”.

²Means “fried rice” in Malay.

³Meaning “to be sick and tired of something one has no control over” in Hokkien, a Chinese dialect.



Yet, it is precisely this lack of equivalence to another language that made me realise that undergirding every phrase, expression, and word was culture. Through evading, or even resisting, translation, their uniqueness to the specific culture is emphasised. Phrases like “木漏れ日,” “青葉雨,” and “物の哀れ” reveal a heightened sensitivity to nature and ephemerality in everyday life that is unique to the Japanese. The degree of specificity and particularity of these terms exemplify the extent of care and attention that is given to nature in Japanese culture, something that sets it apart from others in the world. The honorific form 敬語, on the other hand, echoes the social hierarchies and seniority systems that are distinct to Japanese society. (Admittedly, Korean also has an honorific form, and this can be traced to certain overlaps in the histories of the two languages, but that discussion is for another time, another article). Thus, translation may not necessarily only entail a loss of information, but also a gain in insight; it helps us detect what we lose when switching languages.

In retrospect, it took taking on the perspective of a foreign language learner — an “outsider” — to gain a heightened sensitivity to the quirks of each language. Mayhap it is as the Chinese saying goes: “旁观者清.”⁴

translation may not necessarily only entail a loss of information, but also a gain in insight; it helps us detect what we lose when switching languages.

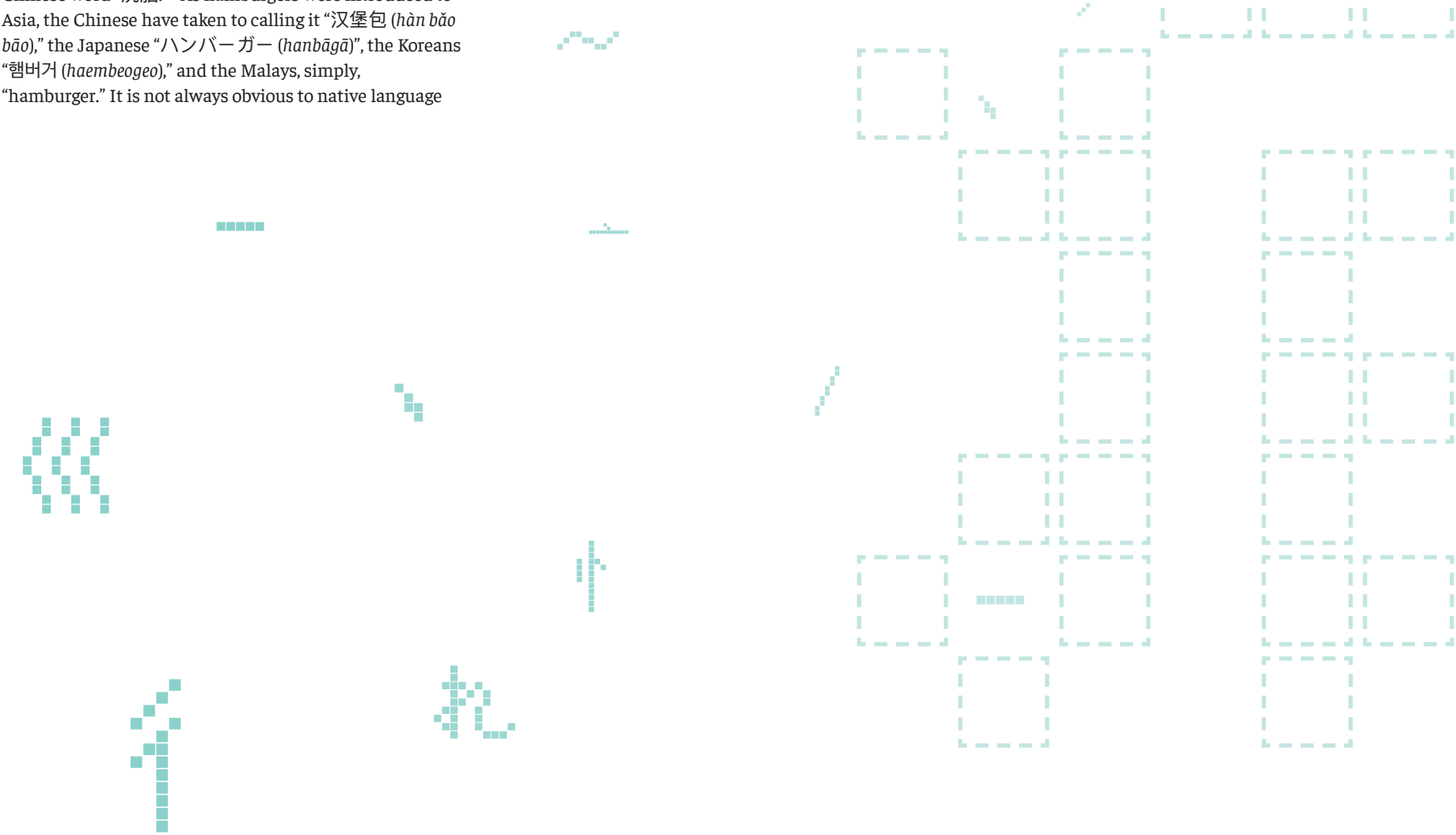
Not all words are put through the ringer, though. Every language has words that are loaned directly from the foreign language, perhaps in acknowledgement of its origins. For example, English directly borrows “tsunami (津波)” from Japanese, “dim sum (*dím sām*)” and “kowtow (kǎutàu)” from Cantonese, and “fengshui (风水)” from Chinese. While a literal translation and not a loanword, the term “brainwashing” was also borrowed from the Chinese word “洗脑.”⁵ As hamburgers were introduced to Asia, the Chinese have taken to calling it “汉堡包 (*hàn bǎo bāo*),” the Japanese “ハンバーガー (*hanbāgā*),” the Koreans “햄버거 (*haembeogeo*),” and the Malays, simply, “hamburger.” It is not always obvious to native language

speakers that they are actually using loanwords due to their normalisation and ubiquity within their own language. An assimilation of languages has thus occurred. Is this the way to subvert translation, then? To simply borrow and adapt? Are there any merits to subverting translation, though? And is there even such a need?

At the very core, translation is an act performed in an attempt to understand. I would not say that it transcends boundaries, but it definitely serves as a bridge between cultures, societies, and individuals. Especially in our contemporary world of continual, rapid globalization, translation would certainly be viewed as necessary and a tremendous boon for cross-cultural exchange. Regardless of its imperfections, it is a powerful tool imperative to navigating the modern age. However, could translation also be viewed as an attempt to compel others to conform? To exert cultural dominance?

By force-fitting another language into the lexis and linguistic rules of another, are we disregarding the nuance, context and historical origins of the source language and imposing that of the other upon it? No language exists in isolation. As various cultures interact, so do languages. And in our current world that adheres to the upward trend on pluralism, it is our imperative to be discerning of both the gains and losses when we attempt to translate one to the other, to be aware of the value that lies in understanding the original language, to realise that a language is more than its technical make-up and carries the weight of its history and culture, and to be aware of the subtle ways it influences how we interact with the world.

⁴Read as “páng guān zhě qīng”, meaning that it is the spectator that has the clearest view of things and sees the most.
⁵Read as “xǐ nǎo”, the first word literally translating to “wash” and the second “brain”.



The Last Supper

by Kenya “Kao Ra Zen” Fulton



“Oh, let us dine upon succulent Babylon.

The mothers and the martyrs have all been properly slaughtered and seasoned and roasted.

The angel wings have all been plucked and battered and seasoned and fried.

The fields and the forests have all been harvested dry of every fruit and flower, of every nut and seed.”

“Such a fine cornucopia.”

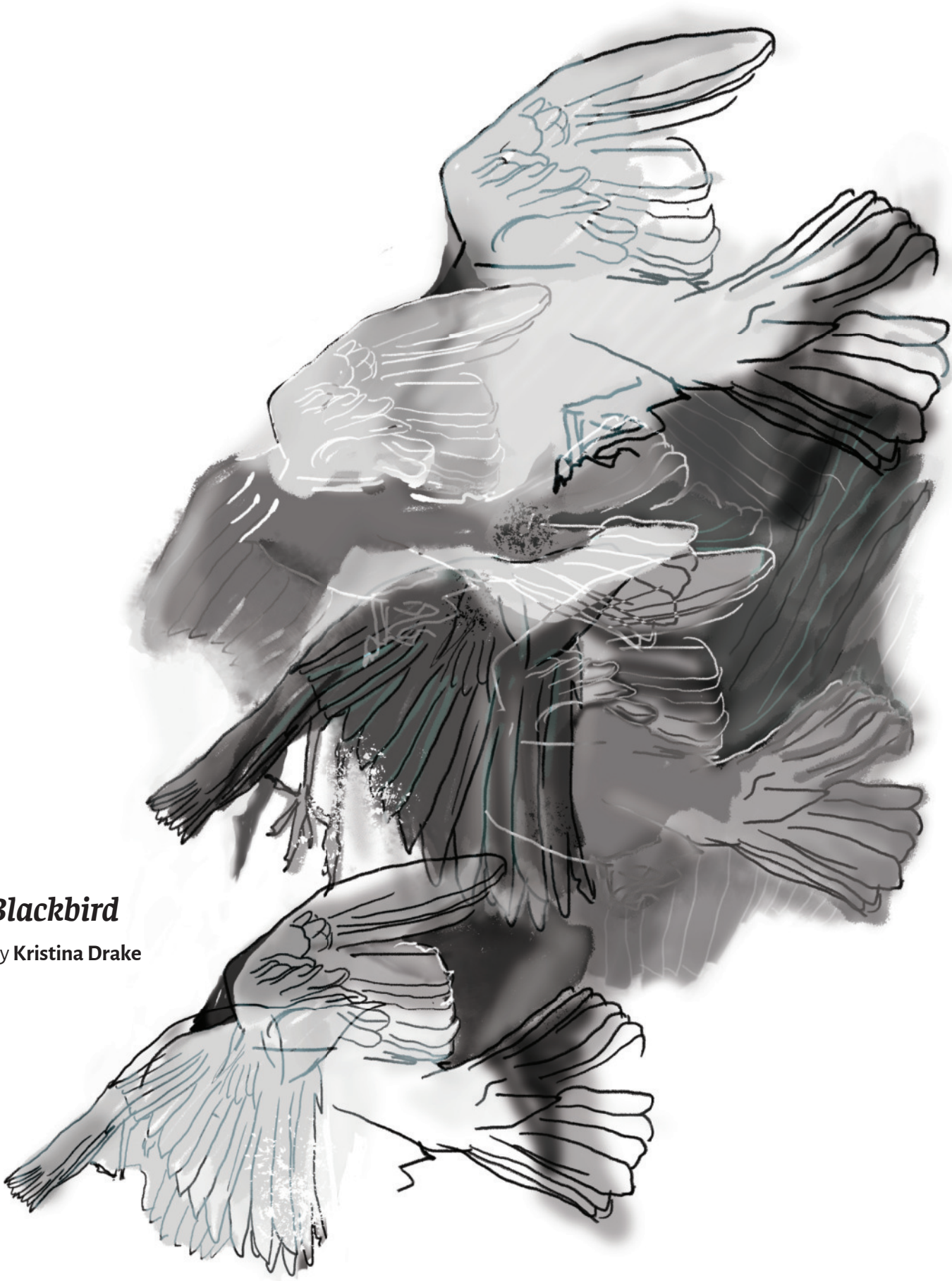
“But what of the hungry?”

“Let them eat the crumbs of our cake as stuffing before we slam them into ovens and serve them up for the carving.

For it is a day most holy, and the natives have generously offered these lands. Give thanks.”

“The ebon-skinned servants shall attend to the needs of our most esteemed guests. The tables have been set and the candles have been lit.

I must apologize I’m afraid, there is no available seating, you need to have previously made a reservation. The armed guards shall now direct you to your side of the wall.”



Blackbird
by Kristina Drake

“Whatever I do/ I’ll be me and you’ll be you.” —Ashley Bryan

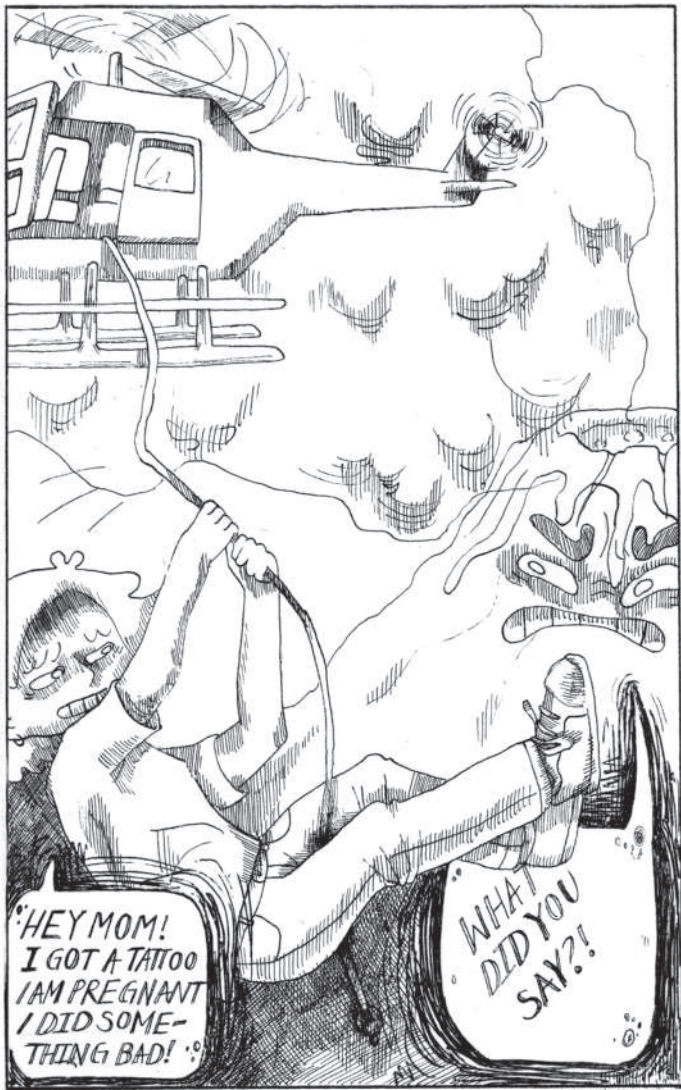
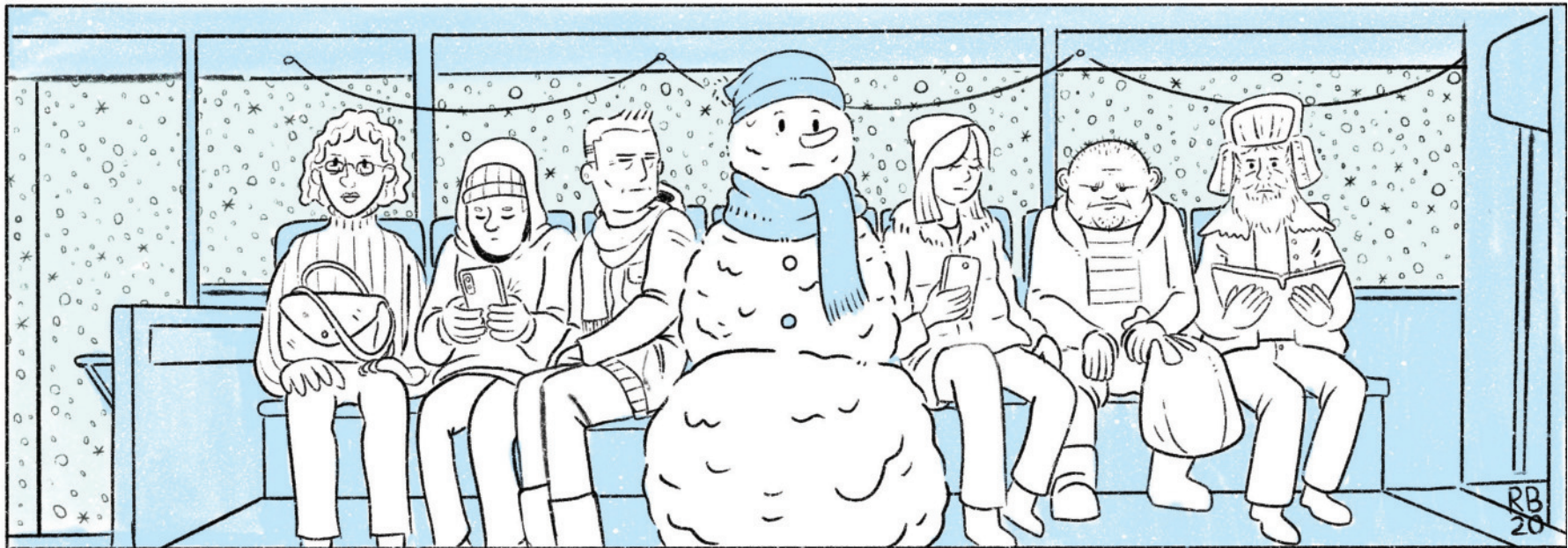
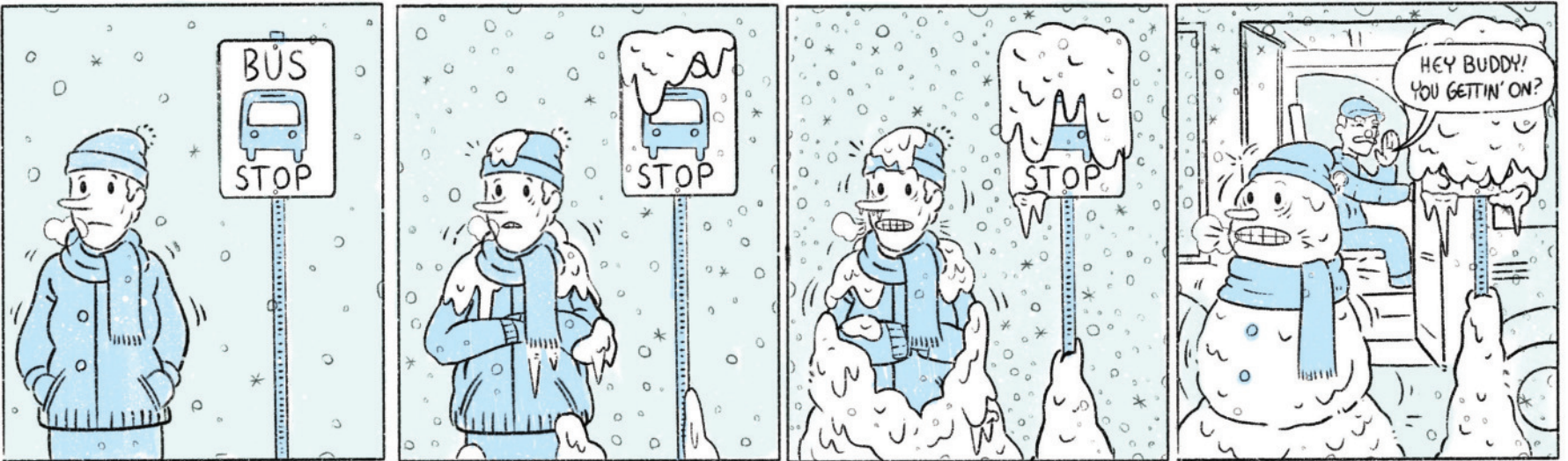
Bright birds beg to know
blackness their feathers flutter for
a feel . . .

Bow down before the
black bird see the way the light
hits the hue Feel the power in the
pigment They know that black
magic is real But it’s not a thing to
borrow not a thing you can steal If
you take the magic from its
maker,

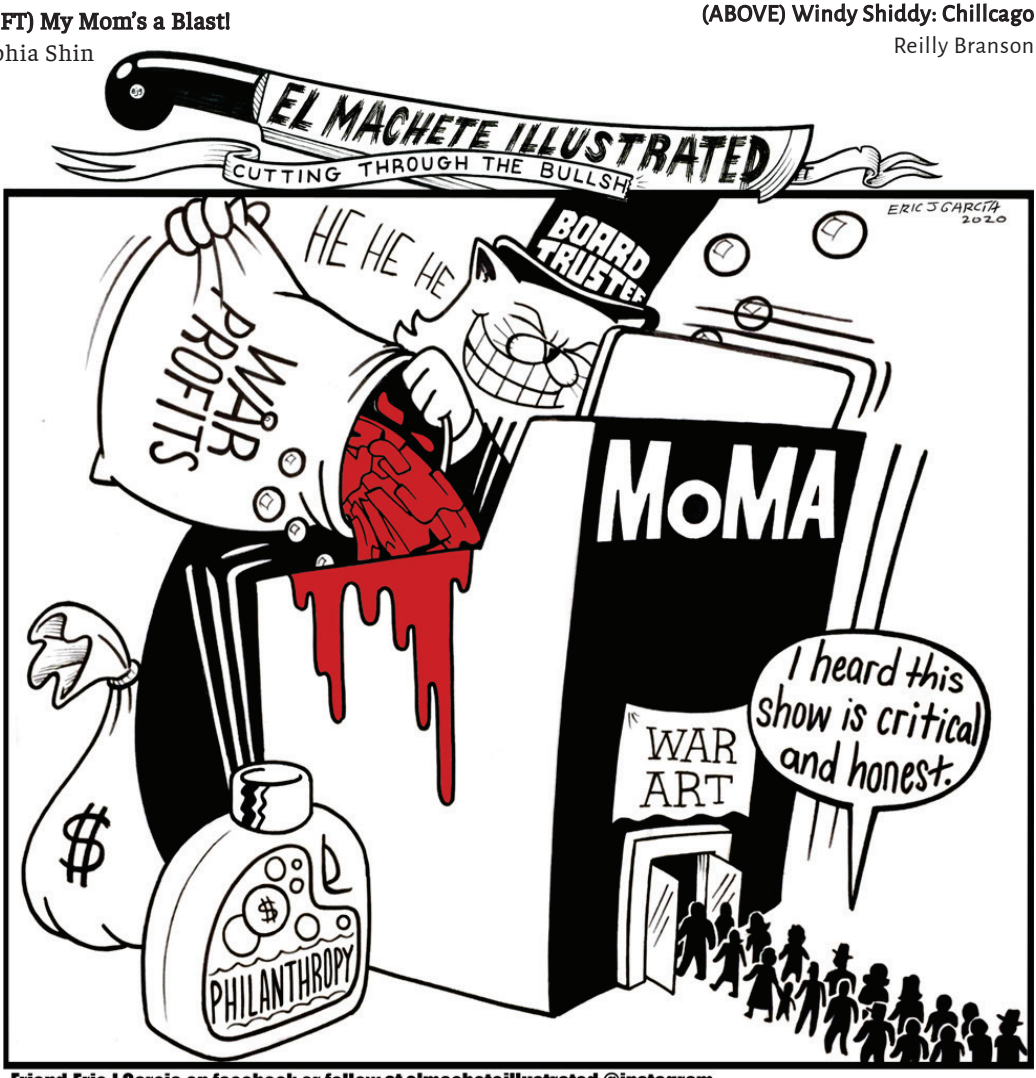
can you keep the magic real?



Bad Parable: Justice
Teddie Bernard



(LEFT) My Mom's a Blast!
Sophia Shin



(ABOVE) Windy Shiddy: Chillcago
Reilly Branson

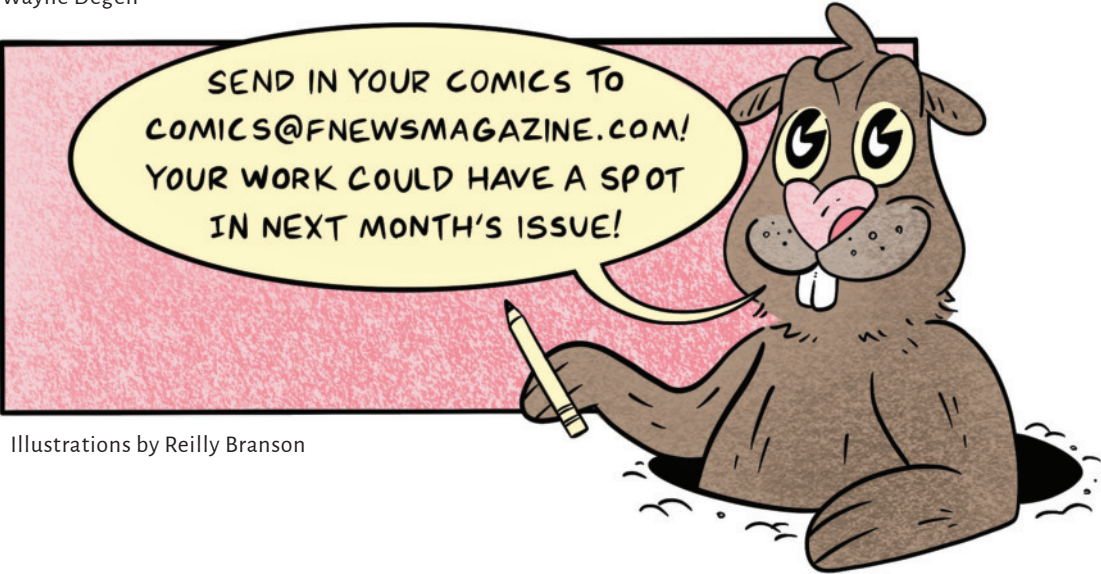
Friend Eric J Garcia on facebook or follow at elmacheteillustrated @instagram.



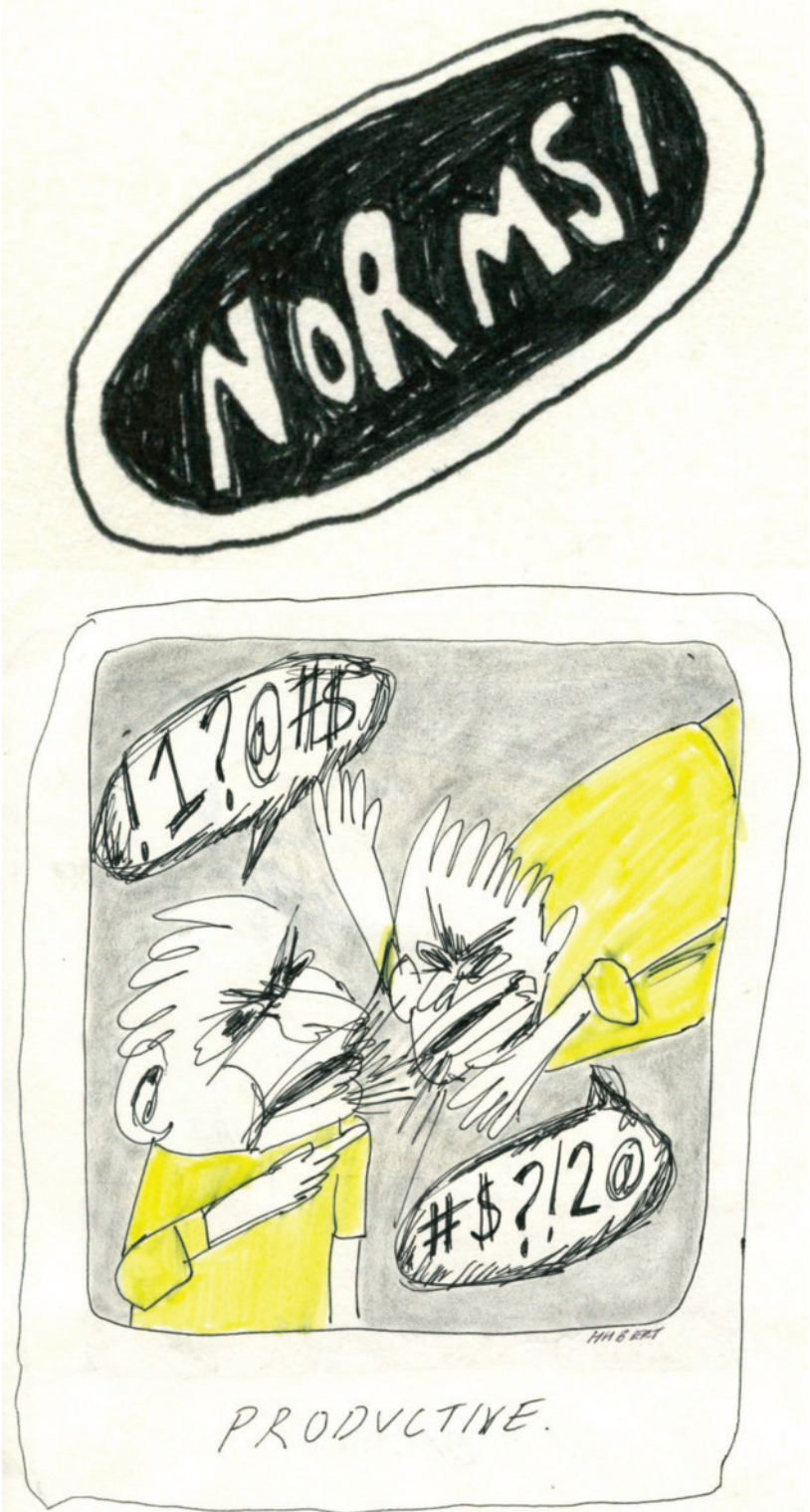
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Michael Orr



INCONSISTENT: Concern
Wayne Degen



Illustrations by Reilly Branson



Norms! #2
Allegra Harvard



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Please bring your laptop and a friend!
Snacks provided

Tuesday, February 25, 2020
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm
LeRoy Neiman Center, 1st Floor



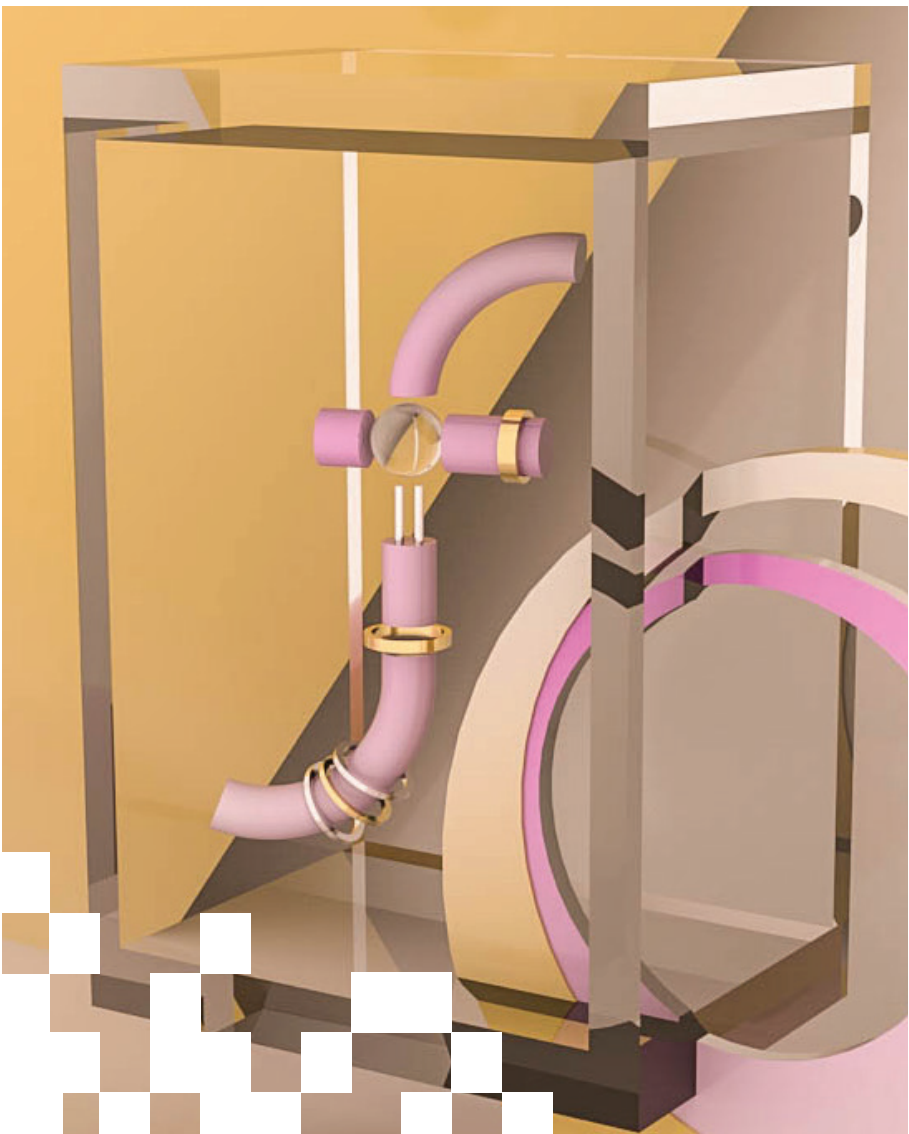
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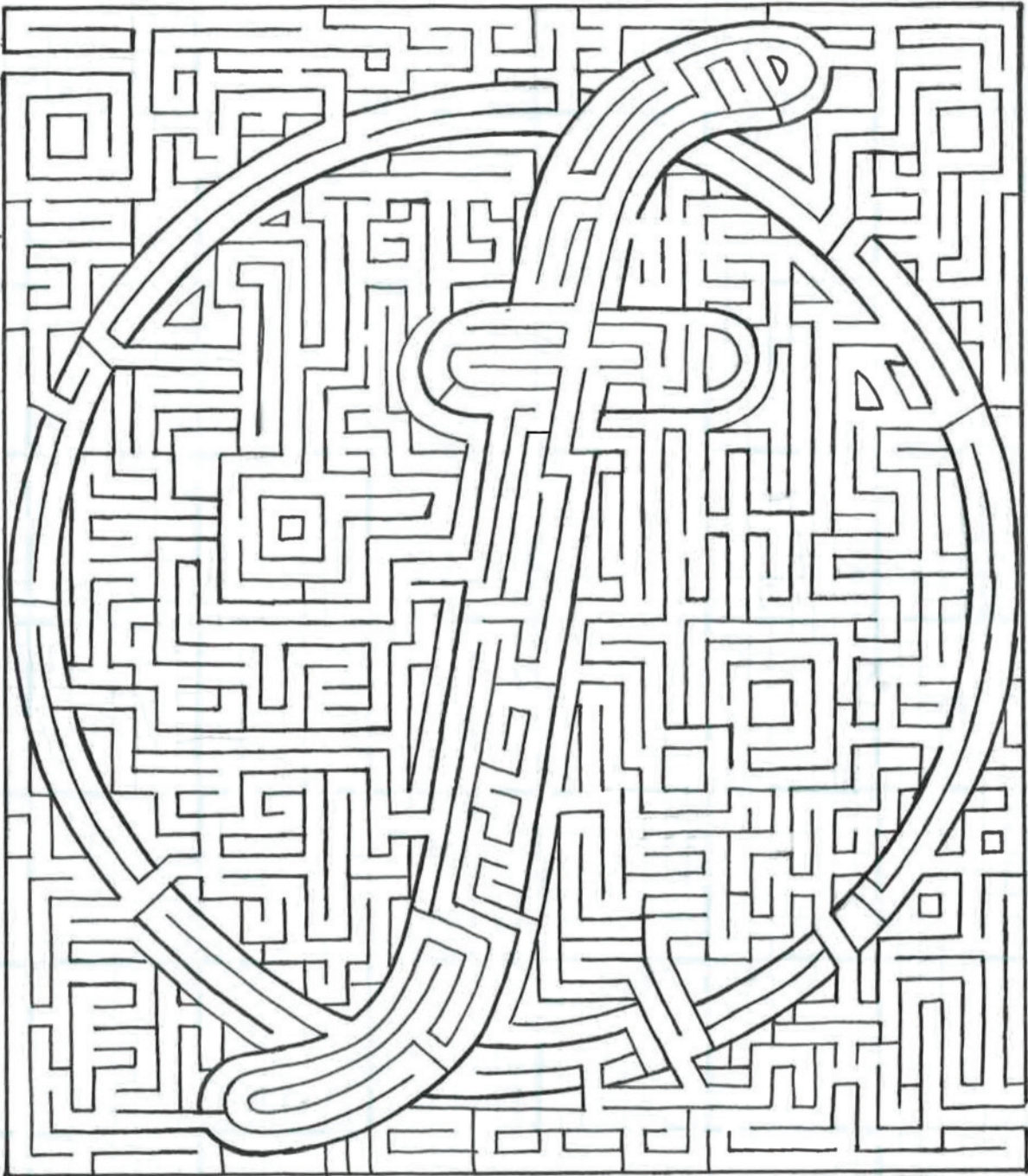
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FINISH!

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ACROSS

1. Buddy, in London
5. 2012 Iran Hostage Crisis film
9. 10 would be an incredibly fast download speed
13. Lyft competitor
14. Palindromic time of day
15. Energy and enthusiasm
16. Actors (and siblings) Bill & Brian
19. Change residences
20. Tennis great Arthur
21. ___ and awed
23. Really likes, slangily
26. Old Testament son of Jacob, and others
27. Punxsutawney Phil's co-star
28. Titular Pixar robot
30. Youngster
31. Polish Fencers Elzbieta or Zygmunt
32. Six more if Phil glimpses his shade
38. Old
39. Parking area
41. Done and ___
42. Indeterminate length of time
45. San Luis ___
48. Criticized personally
49. Legendary comedian Bob
51. "As I was saying..."
52. Nobel Laureate Wiesel
53. Edward and Marian of Peterborough, NH artists' colony
58. Bad Scrabble rack?
59. "Shut the front ___!"
60. Hang around lazily
61. Pepa's counterpart
62. Semicircular recess in a church
63. Not bad

DOWN

1. Mother, in London
2. Aladdin's primate pal
3. Prefix meaning threefold
4. Something to run
5. "As I was saying..."
6. Monk's garment
7. A mild oath, in British dialect
8. Hawaiian fishes
9. Treasure container
10. Lad
11. One who smooths roads
12. Strips side shoots from a length of branch
17. About
18. "Should it be me?"
22. One who hails from Norway's capital city
23. Suffix denoting allegiance
24. The greatest ___ on earth (Barnum & Bailey claim)
25. Broke the fast confession
28. Communion item
29. Reaction to very cute puppy
31. He/she/they put (Sp.)
33. Leaf pasted flat against front or back cover
34. Lowly Mario enemy
35. Crosby beatified?
36. Sgl. ___ (March Madness terms)
37. Film part, say
40. Edifying lecture series
42. At sea no more
43. "Thank God that's over!"
44. Legendary Phils hurler Cole
45. Bests of the best
46. Beautiful, in Rome
47. First person affirmation
50. "All done!"
51. Ruckuses
54. Policeman
55. British bathroom
56. Bean and Cool J
57. ___-mo (reduced camera speed)

Think you've got it solved? Head to fnewsmagazine.com for all the answers, and much more!

Puzzlemasters: Reilly Branson and Dustin Lowman

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March 24

IAN CHENG

In partnership with SAIC's Department of Film, Video, New Media,
and Animation's Conversations at the Edge Series

April 6

TRENTON DOYLE HANCOCK

In partnership with SAIC's Department of Painting and Drawing

April 21

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