

# The Blue Guitar



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## Editors’ Note

Late at night heading home from work, I’ll pass by a desert area and sometimes see a coyote lope across the road ahead of me. Curiously, it always stops after it crosses and looks back at me before disappearing into the darkness.

Unfortunately, the area is now being sealed off with a chain-link fence for development, curtailing the coyotes’ roaming area. Whether I see my coyotes again remains to be seen.

The intersection of humans and nature is a motif running throughout this issue, in the works of our artists, writers and poets.

As much as art has the power to inspire, restore and save us, so too does nature. Indeed, the awesome power of creation through nature was our first, most primal inspiration for our art. Meanwhile, nature endures. It was here long before us and it will be here long after us — despite our best (worst?) efforts.

So, when the coyote looks back at us, is it with anger, fear, pity ... or something else? That’s up to us.

– Co-Editor Rebecca “Becca” Dyer



Co-Editor  
 Rebecca  
 “Becca” Dyer

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[www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org](http://www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org)

Spring 2018

# 3 poems by Rex Lambert

## Praying Monk

© 2018

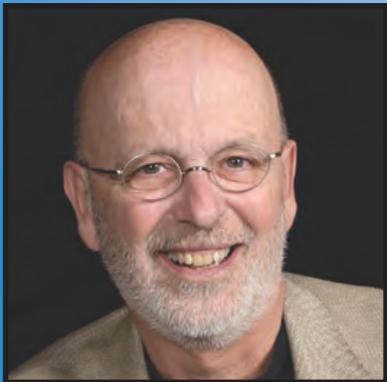
though he has always been here  
in one form or another  
and will remain long after  
we rappel and walk away

it is because we kneel  
bow heads and are silent  
because we exist  
to make associations

see striking likenesses  
resemblances between ourselves  
and things more permanent  
than ourselves

that he exists now  
under the assumed name  
we have given him  
head bowed under a rock cowl

kneeling forever petrified  
in prayerful genuflection  
a monk turned miraculously to stone  
that was once only mountain



Rex Lambert was one of the early writers in the Arizona Commission on the Arts' "Poets in the Schools" program (1973-74). His work has appeared in a variety of publications and is anthologized in "Poetry of the Desert Southwest" (Baleen Press) and "Southwest: A Contemporary Anthology" (Red Earth Press). Since 2005, he has been a regular supernumerary with Arizona Opera and Phoenix Opera. He is returning to poetry, his first love, after a long hiatus.

# Hieroglyphic Canyon

© 2018

whoever named the Superstitions  
must have known this hidden place  
where fancy is the only science  
rock the paper censors could not burn

dream carver, these narrow canyon walls  
were your only book for visions  
you etched your stick-shaped figures  
deep in timeless sandstone pages

dream carver, do not be uneasy  
at my presence in your secret heart  
no one comes here now but other poets  
and i have left my can of spray paint home

# biking to work

© 2018

1

in this house of air  
stranger things than i  
live and breathe

call each other names  
i've never heard of  
talk, make love, and move

die and resurrect themselves  
in this house of air  
i, also, move

2

dawn dissolves the moon  
into light, the neighborhood  
children are sleeping

the desert is quiet and cool  
as i pedal alone into morning  
my breath, barely invisible

melts in the sun like a dream  
in this house of air  
the wind whispers my name

3

in this house of air  
time becomes the thing  
i can't conceive of

i look beyond the handlebars  
and orient to distant peaks  
that wait exactly where

i left them yesterday  
in this house of air  
i, too, will live forever

# Spider Eyes

## By Nick Smallwood

© 2018

The lack of moonlight made conditions ideal to begin the hunt. The chilly wind tickled the small hairs on my freckled arms. I was a skinny, redheaded 11-year-old kid with a heart for adventure and a stomach for chocolate-chip cookies. I was one of the lucky ones though, one whose metabolism was locked on one setting—turbo.

With each step, the cool Bermuda grass gave way, flattening and then springing back to its upright position. In my right hand I held onto a flashlight, and with a click of a button, the terrain in front of me came alive. That was when I saw it. Two small shimmers of light on the ground below ... spider eyes.

While I don't recall much from my sixth-grade days at Dorothy Stinson Elementary School in Safford, Arizona, I will always remember the science fair project that my dad and I worked on that year. If you had asked me before my time in the sixth grade whether I was interested in science, I would probably have smiled and lied to you. I was not a kid who enjoyed taking classes that required thinking analytically. My passions were in the creative fields, especially English.

So, when the time rolled around for the yearly science fair, I found myself face to face with an approaching deadline and an idea tank stuck on empty. Thankfully, my dad had just the

remedy: Combine science with two of my other interests—the outdoors and bugs. The result was a project where we observed wolf spiders and attempted to track the distance they traveled outside their burrows at night.

Each night, when the sun dropped behind Mount Graham and the blueberry sky turned to sable, we grabbed our flashlights and began the hunt. As we walked gently on the grass in our backyard, we pointed our flashlights at the ground, all the while focusing our eyes like owls looking for a midnight meal.

When our beams of light bounced off the miniscule eyes of a wolf spider, they would glisten like small gems. After confirming that the reflection was indeed coming from an eight-legged creature, we would attempt to locate its hole. We would then step out the distance between the spider and its lair, and mark the measurement in a notebook.

Although Harvard scientists would scoff at our amateur research methods, I still remember the adrenaline rush I felt from something I assumed would be boring. Not only did competing in the science fair allow me to step outside my comfort zone and experience something new, but it also taught me that science is all around you.

You just have to keep your eyes open.

Nick Smallwood is a senior journalism student at the University of Arizona. While his true passion is for visual storytelling, he also enjoys dabbling in creative writing and personal narratives. In the future, he dreams of traveling the world and working as a photographer/cinematographer for the National Geographic Society.



# A fiery encounter

By Jessica Blackburn

© 2018

**D**eclaring war is painful. I would know, because it's exactly what I did when I was 8 years old.

It was a broiling summer afternoon, and my parents just had a pool installed in our large Florida backyard. I was swimming and watching my copper-haired dachshund Macy chasing birds but never catching them.

Drained from my hourlong swim and more interested in Macy's hijinks, I climbed out of the sparkling blue water and towed myself off.

I was sure to be quick when I slid the back door open and snagged a Popsicle from the freezer inside the kitchen, lest Mom find out I'd been dripping on her clean floors.

Leaving the cool air-conditioning behind me, I stepped outside to find Macy rolling around in the grass.

I passed the pool and hopped the stepping-stones leading to Dad's toolshed. It was lifted with cinder blocks, and with the door ajar, the opening acted as a makeshift ledge I could sit on.

In past years, my feet had never been able to touch the grass and always dangled, but this year I had grown several inches. My prune-textured feet could now rest in the shaded grass.

For a few minutes I ate my icy treat, letting it melt all over my fingers.

My left foot, which was resting in the tall grass, began to twitch. I ignored it, more interested in watching Macy, mesmerized by her red fur against the vivid sea of green.

But the twitching didn't relent. It turned into a prickling, sharp pain. I looked down to discover I had invaded a fire ant colony, and my foot was paying the price. The ants' retaliation felt like fire.

I accidentally declared war, and the small red warriors were not relenting, their exoskeletons shining like armor in the afternoon sun. Stunned, I lifted my foot and smacked it, managing to kill the few that clung on. In return, they left me with angry red stings, which lasted for days.

It wasn't until years later that I reflected on what happened. It's human nature to defend one's family, is it not in a fire ant's nature to do the same?

That first clash with the environment, while painful and unpleasant, taught me to respect the nature of wild creatures.

I've been sure not to declare war since.



Macy and the author when she was a child.



Jessica Blackburn is a journalism major at the University of Arizona, graduating this May. She's a military brat and has lived in Iceland, Florida, Utah and Arizona. Her love of storytelling and the diverse animal and plant life she encountered throughout her childhood motivated her to become a science and environmental journalist. Contact the writer at [blackburnj3@email.arizona.edu](mailto:blackburnj3@email.arizona.edu).

# 7 poems by David Chorlton

## The Next Day

© 2018

Swaybacked shadows on the half  
-sunned slopes tilt left  
and right with the passage  
of a day across the mountain  
after last night's wind  
left a dying tree still holding  
the hawk's nest high  
above buying and selling. There  
it rests, woven into stormlight.



South Mountain. Photo by David Chorlton

David Chorlton is a transplanted European, who has lived in Phoenix since 1978. His poems have appeared in many publications online and in print, and reflect his affection for the natural world, as well as occasional bewilderment at aspects of human behavior. His newest collection of poems is "Bird on a Wire" from Presa Press, and The Bitter Oleander Press has published "Shatter the Bell in My Ear," his translations of poems by Austrian poet Christine Lavant.



# Winter's Desert

© 2018

When cloud passes low  
across the desert, it presses  
color out so every green  
is a grey and creosote bushes become  
scratches on space.

A saguaro absorbs the light  
around it, and the barrel cactus  
keeps an inner spark  
in its flesh. A mesquite dried  
beyond its life  
has branches wrestling  
with the air. The hours have  
a slow heartbeat. Listen:  
they underscore a flicker's tapping  
and the sparrows  
in their thorny wash  
whose chatter  
casts no shadow, while  
the roadrunner is  
a rush to the corner of a blinking eye

# Desert: After Surgery

© 2018

Days after the incision  
the stones underfoot can't tell  
a human step from that  
of the coyote. The scars  
where earth broke apart for the mountain  
to emerge  
shine brightly. A hawk's shadow  
strokes the ground. The bandage loosens  
and the ache  
evaporates. There's just  
a surface itch now, where the weekend riders  
left their tracks. Walking  
is easier. The mountain  
rises to the edge  
of consciousness. The trail  
winds low and level with a surgical blue  
sky above. Hold tight  
by the roots; wait for rain; perch  
high and take  
sunlight intravenously.

# Cooper's Hawk

© 2018

A sharp wind blows  
the morning birds alive  
as a hawk's downward trajectory  
leaves a cut in the sky  
through which a flock  
of doves spills  
into panicking sunlight.

# The Digital Desert

© 2018

After the diagram displaying  
Hohokam canals, the screen  
flashes off, then on, then off and  
back in time for a scorpion  
to appear, but not long enough  
to accompany  
the speaker's description  
of how the mano pressed against  
a metate to grind  
mesquite pods into a flour from which  
sweet cakes were made. The people  
who preceded us  
dug without shovels, turned  
ocotillo into fences, and saw tools  
in the hearts of saguaro. Pushing  
a button should show  
how they picked high fruit,  
while we only see  
a flickering sky and a picture  
out of sequence  
of a Gila monster. Next up  
are the rocks on which the people  
scratched figures to record  
where deer ran and news  
good for a century  
but the new projector  
has lost control  
and rattlesnakes escape  
into the pre-industrial darkness  
the sky becomes each year  
on the night before  
summer rains begin.

# The Pack

© 2018

From a gully the sun  
going down couldn't reach  
came a bark,  
                    and a second  
just before its echo. Then  
the rock walls parted  
as howls  
like sound catching fire  
ricocheted  
                    off one another  
as the mountain leaned back  
in full cry  
for a minute until  
                    a hammer-  
blow of silence  
hit, and it curled back  
into granodiorite sleep.

# The Desert Next Door

© 2018

We have all the water we need  
but don't ask where it comes from  
as long as the grass and the garden  
demand it. Every summer  
the desert moves in  
from its place on the mountain  
and tightens its grip  
on the air. We're the first line  
of suburbia with a view  
onto the steep climb drought takes  
from the foothills, past the cholla,  
all the way up to where coyotes step  
out of the clouds and turn into  
rain on the run.

# Mano Sotelo

Tucson Artist



“Creating And Escaping My Story (The Cave)”

Oil on panel

30” x 40”

The artist received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Otis Art Institute Parsons School of Design and a Master of Fine Arts degree from The Academy of Art University. His work has been exhibited at the Coultts Museum of Art, Alexandria Museum of Art, Tampa Museum of Art, Coos Art Museum, Tucson Museum of Art, University of Arizona Museum of Art, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson Desert Art Museum, Phoenix Art Museum, local and national juried and invitational shows and a variety of Tucson galleries. His work has also been highlighted in competitions hosted by The Artist’s Magazine and International Artist Magazine. Currently art faculty at Pima Community College, the artist has been teaching in higher education for the past 16 years. Appointed by the Tucson city manager, he is a former member of the Tucson Public Art and Community Design Committee. His website is [www.sotelostudio.com](http://www.sotelostudio.com). He is on Instagram @manosoteloartist.



# Mano Sotelo

Tucson Artist

“Resurrection Project, Savior 5”  
Oil on panel  
24” x 36”

“I’m interested in belief and value systems (i.e., mythology, religion, philosophy and psychology), and the study of religious doctrines of salvation (soteriology). Specifically, how we create our own realities every day through the adoption of prescribed precepts and unquestioned thoughts we entertain as the truth.”

- Mano Sotelo



# Mano Sotelo

Tucson Artist



**“Resurrection Project,  
Savior 1”  
Oil on panel  
36” x 48”**

# Mano Sotelo

Tucson Artist



“Resurrection Project, Savior 4”

Oil on panel

30” x 30”

# Mano Sotelo

Tucson Artist

“Resurrection Project, Savior 6”  
Oil on panel  
30” x 40”



# Good Intentions

## By Emily Dieckman

© 2018

### Grocery List

- Milk (skim)
- 1 dzn organic eggs
- tomatoes
- bananas
- kale
- yogurt
- carrot juice

### Grocery Store Receipt

- Milk (2%)
- 1 dzn eggs
- 1 tomato
- 1 box s'more PopTarts
- 2 pts Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream
- 1 loaf white bread
- 2 bags of chips

### To-do list

Get taxes done early this year!  
Get a pen pal and start writing to them  
Look into which nonprofits are the best to donate to  
Learn how to meditate  
Work out

### Internet Search History

are narwhals real?  
how can you tell if a narwhal is fake or real?  
what happens if you put a balloon in the microwave?  
how old do you have to be before you can just give up?  
is a sore wrist a symptom of cancer?  
chinese food near me  
cat videos

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Emily Dieckman is lucky to write both for her job and in her spare time. Besides writing, she enjoys drinking out of mugs, reading, watching movies, baking and singing very loudly in the car. Her writing has appeared in the Tucson Weekly, The Explorer Newspaper, Borgen Magazine, Orange Coast Magazine and The Tucson Dog. She can be reached at [emily.dieckman@gmail.com](mailto:emily.dieckman@gmail.com).

**List of Requirements for Any Man I Will Consider Dating**

- Intellectual
- Likes the same music as me
- Interested in exploring new restaurants around town, but also frugal with money – not someone who wants to eat out all of the time. He just has to strike a good balance
- Gets along really well with my parents
- Likes cats, enjoys giving cats human names so that we can name our future kitten Megan.

**Marriage Vows**

I promise to cherish you each and every day. I will pick you up when you're down, and sing your praises when you find success. And I know you will, because I believe in you with my whole heart. I promise to take care of you when you're sick, to bring you breakfast in bed on your birthday, and to do everything I can to make your life easier and better.

**Social Media Post**

I am so sick and tired of seeing the way people raise their kids these days! YES you need to discipline your children, but first and foremost, every child needs to feel loved. Children are precious gifts from God, and when I have children someday, I am going to make them feel special each and every day.

We will have family dinners together. I will tuck them into bed with a story each night. And they will know that I'm not "too busy" or "too tired" to do the most important and beautiful job of all: being their mother.

**Tinder Profile of Future Husband**

I'm just trying to have a good time!  
Will always be there to help you finish your food  
Dog person

**Chore List (Annotated)**

- Her: do the dishes (I KNOW THIS IS MY CHORE, BUT WORK HAS BEEN SUPER HECTIC, AND I'M KIND OF EXHAUSTED. ALSO YOU'RE ALWAYS LEAVING YOUR BOWLS IN THE SINK FROM AFTER BREAKFAST AND I JUST WANTED TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU CAN TOTALLY PUT IT IN THE DISHWASHER AFTER YOU'RE DONE USING IT AND NOT EVERYTHING HAS TO BE MY JOB ALL THE TIME. THANKS! ☺)
- Him: mow the lawn (**I don't want to do this anymore. I don't even care whether we have a lawn at all.**)
- Vacuum. ~~YOUR TURN.~~ **Your turn.** ~~YOUR TURN.~~ **Your turn.**
- Buy toilet paper.

**Social Media Post Six Years Later**

Is anyone available to watch my son tonight for just a couple of hours? He's pretty easy for the most part, and you can just let him watch TV. I just need to rest for a couple of hours because I feel like I haven't slept since he was born two years ago lol.

# 3 poems by Tom Wagner

## For Only a Minute

© 2018

Walking up the well-worn steps  
I make a right turn  
at the landing,

gripping the smooth  
cedar handrail  
I follow it

to the roof deck  
and hear a faint windsong.  
There I see

for less than a minute  
red, orange and yellow  
straight sun bolts

extending outward like a flower  
sparkling,  
turning the wisps of clouds

into iridescent ribbons  
moving out and back  
in closing petals of dusk.



The poet writes: "Born and raised in Arizona, attended Arizona State University, receiving a Bachelor of Architecture degree. I began writing poetry over forty years ago. Self-published my first poetry collection in 2010 titled 'Beyond Silence: A quiet voice is given expression through poetry.' Currently working on a second collection of architecture-themed poetry." Reach the poet at [tom@wagnerpartnership.com](mailto:tom@wagnerpartnership.com).

# Bookstore Backdrop

© 2018

He walks through the bookstore  
not a quiet place like a library  
and is surrounded with the softer sounds  
of conversation,

pages flipping, holding only a glance  
are only slightly distracting.  
Then for a moment  
the sounds quiet

and he becomes aware of the background music  
pushing on his shoulders  
familiar melodies touching  
something in his memory.

He recalls  
the music of Simon and Garfunkel  
he listened to as a teenager  
and how strong the grip

was on his emotions,  
and didn't know it at the time  
but Homeward Bound, Sounds of Silence,  
Cloudy, I Am A Rock

and So Long Frank Lloyd Wright  
became him.  
Others too,  
Jackson Browne's The Pretender,

and so many of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band  
they can't all be named.  
Although the melodies are etched  
in the subconscious,

the lyric holds the spirit.  
Denver's words bring solace  
And how music paints pictures,  
Thinking how the music is you.

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**Continued from page 23**

Carol's Tapestry of Hues  
and Seeker's Little Boxes  
about architecture  
and how we live,

have the substance  
to reach the private  
depths of memory.  
The songs grab you by the throat

demanding full attention  
to sometimes bring tears  
and sometimes to bring

a smile when he closes  
his eyes to hear  
the pure softness  
of the Native American Flute.

# Line

© 2018

The soul of a drawing,  
it leaves its mark  
and connects the hand  
and mind.

A line can make a frown  
or make a smile.  
A line with its own personality  
can go in two different directions.  
I'm not talking about  
a line of work

but graphite  
or ink on paper,  
an image of one's thought or dream.  
A line, only four letters, can be endless  
and have an edge, razor sharp  
straight or curved,

or be the ground in a sketch.  
The line can become  
a blade of grass or a cathedral.  
It can be continuous  
or broken into segments  
implying continuity.

A complicated form  
it can be bold or timid,  
but no matter its shape  
it should be strong at its end  
drawn with conviction  
as an artist lives a life,

it does not want to be fuzzy,  
only to be itself,  
and not made up of many  
short starts and stops.  
A line can lie flat,  
or swirl into the shape

Continued on page 26

**Continued from page 25**

of Mickey Mouse  
and the New York skyline.  
A line can be drawn  
in the sand as a challenge  
or be a guide across a void.  
A line can define space,

contain it, or expand it outward,  
it can restrict movement  
or let it flow free.  
It can be the shadow of a smile  
or wrinkles of wisdom  
giving definition to lives,  
or make music from strings  
on an old guitar.

# The Teachings of Snakes

By Diego Huerta

© 2018

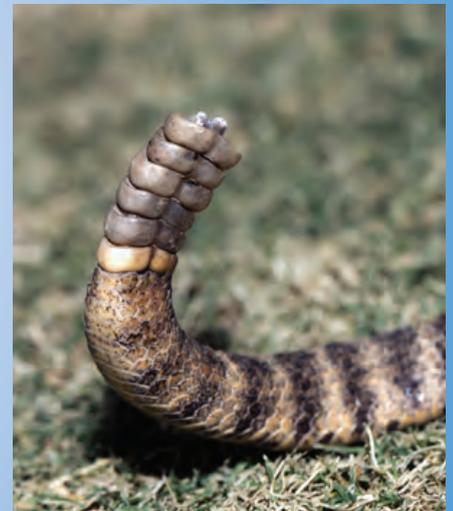
According to the website of the Stone Canyon Club, a home within its gated community costs anywhere from “under \$600,000 to over \$4,000,000.” Membership in the community’s private 18-hole golf course carries an initiation fee of \$15,000. The two entrances to the development are blocked by heavy gates, monitored by a guard and covered with security cameras. Located in Oro Valley, Arizona, this community is reserved almost exclusively for the rich. I say “almost” because, like all wildlife, the snakes get in for free.

Five students, myself included, spent most nights last summer driving around this lavish development looking for these snakes. We were conducting a long-term study looking at the development’s effects on local reptiles. The study taught me about many things: fieldwork, study design, reptile safety. But most important, it showed me a new reason to study the natural world.

While on vacation as a young boy, I saw my first ever wild diamondback rattlesnake coiled next to a boulder at a rest stop. While I was growing up, my parents taught me to be afraid of snakes. “If you see one, just come find us,” they would say. So, ignoring years of advice and guidance, I rushed back to the car, grabbed my dad’s camera and began to document my encounter with this strange creature. Thankfully, I had the good sense to keep my distance from the snake and received only a mild scolding when, beaming with pride, I showed the pictures to my mother. It was worth it. After all, snakes were cool.

This encounter was part of why I applied to study snakes last summer. My younger self would certainly be proud. During the fieldwork portion of the research, I caught loads of snakes, many of them venomous. By summer’s end, my fascination with snakes had shifted from boyhood wonderment to intellectual curiosity. Snakes were no longer abnormal. They were a part of the desert, the houses, the mountains, the roads and the golf course. They belonged here as much as we did.

I began to appreciate my studies of the environment in a new way. I saw myself within nature and felt more at home in the desert. The natural world works in complex and elegant ways, and there are many reasons to study it. I now know that in addition to those reasons, I will be better simply for knowing my place in it.



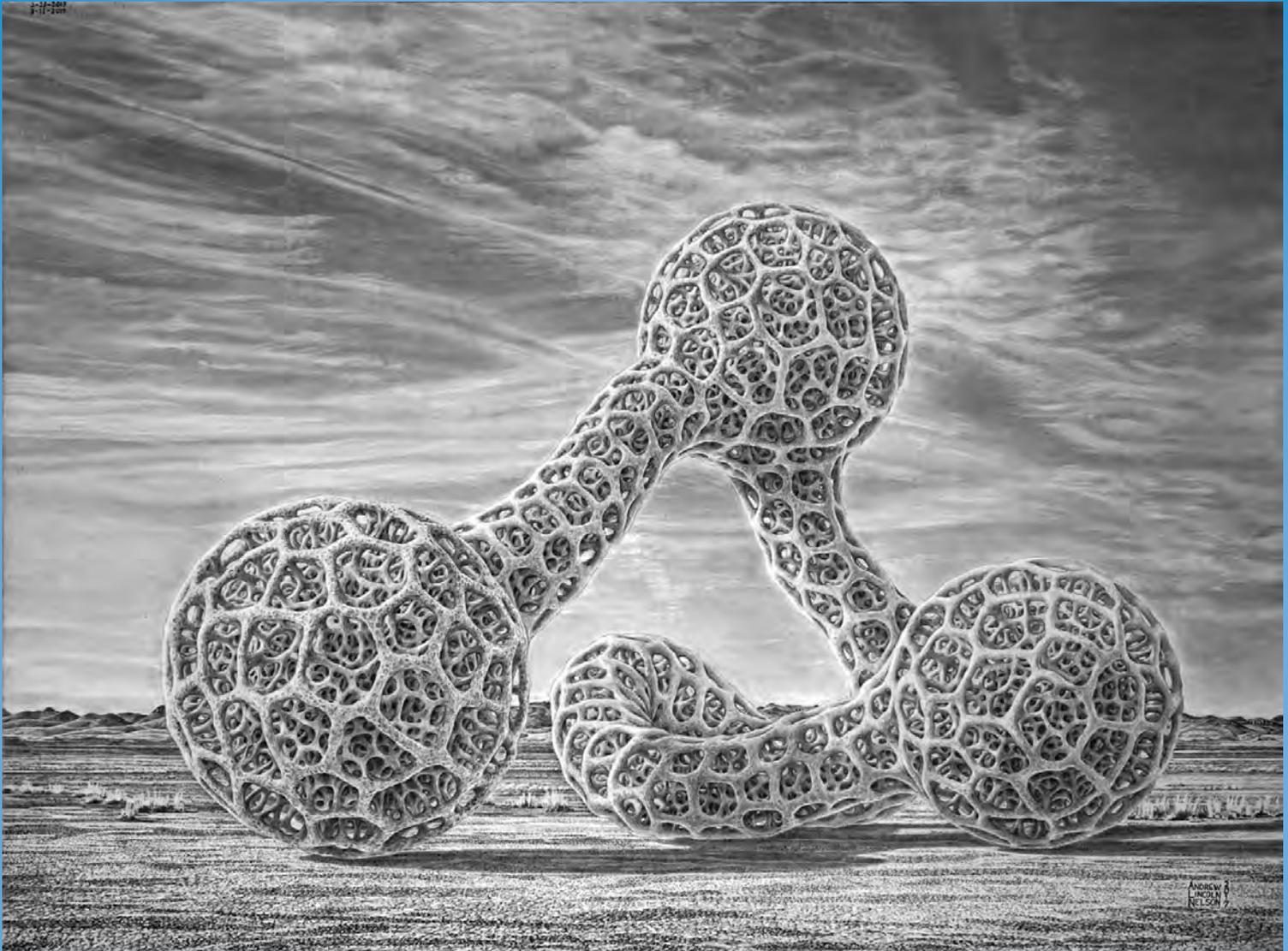
Images by René Clark of Dancing Snake Nature Photography.



Diego Huerta is a sophomore Environmental Science major at the University of Arizona with a focus on Society and the Environment. A Tucson native, Diego’s research interests include microbiology, herpetology, and science communication. Diego is currently working as a research assistant on herpetology research in Stone Canyon. During his spare time, Diego enjoys cooking, hiking, and playing board games. Email: [diegohuerta@email.arizona.edu](mailto:diegohuerta@email.arizona.edu). Twitter @DiegoGHuerta.

# Andrew Lincoln Nelson

Tucson Artist



**“Phyto Ost 1”**  
**Graphite on Bristol Board**  
**18 x 24**  
**2017**



Andrew Lincoln Nelson is an artist working in Tucson Arizona. He was born in Laramie, Wyoming, and pursued an academic career in biologically inspired artificial intelligence and engineering before moving to fine art. He produces detailed drawings of austere landscapes inhabited by unearthly creatures. His art combines biological complexity, landscape rendering and the fusion of technology with organic life. Math exobiology and artificial intelligence influence his work. Although Nelson has had some formal training in print-making and pursued a secondary art concentration at The Evergreen State College in Olympia Washington, he is largely self-taught. Nelson occasionally travels through the southwestern United States, driving down back roads and climbing over interstates' fences to photograph landscapes and collect weathered natural objects and desert plant remains. These, as well as hand-made wooden shapes and art tools, serve as models and inspiration for his work. All of his renderings are hand-drawn with graphite on heavy Bristol board paper. These works have been displayed at international conferences including “Artificial Life,” New York 2014 and at Arizona venues including “The art of Science” March 2017 at University of Arizona Art Museum 2017. Nelson can be contacted at [alnelson@ieee.org](mailto:alnelson@ieee.org) and [www.nelsonrobotics.org](http://www.nelsonrobotics.org).

# Andrew Lincoln Nelson

Tucson Artist



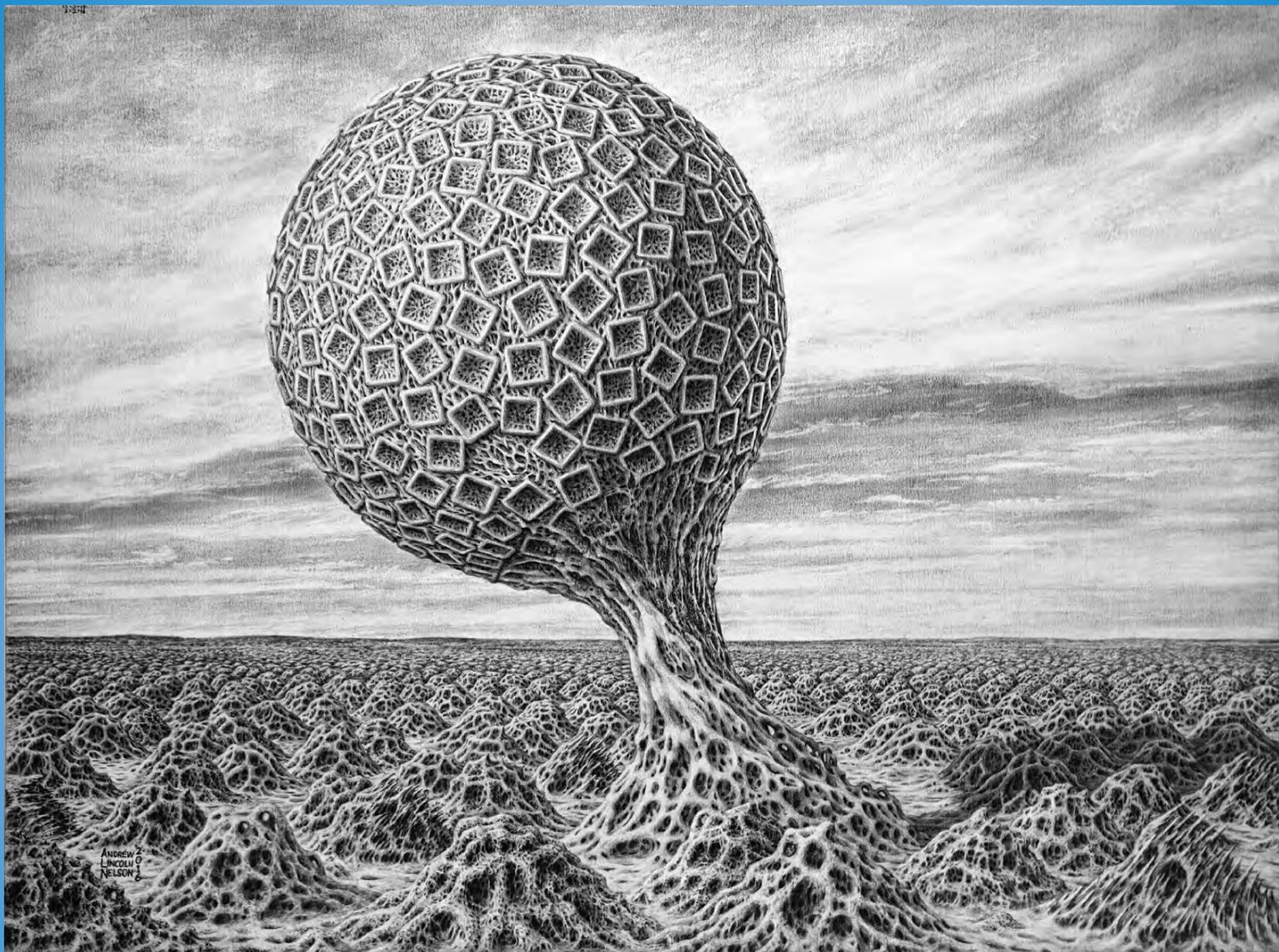
**“Osteo Borg 2”**  
**Graphite on Bristol Board**  
**18 x 24**  
**2017**

“What would it be like to look out on an unearthly landscape and see a truly non-human entity? Is there some common nature shared by all possible forms of life? Perhaps here on Earth nature will fuse biology and feral technology into a distantly future ecosystem that bears only the slightest hint of its anthropoid origins. My work is intended to provide at least a passing sense of what it might feel like to look at an organism that is profoundly not us. My drawings also reference some ideas stolen from surrealism and the speculative science of exobiology. I feel compelled to throw into this mix a sort of naturalistic complexity overlaid onto rudimentary geomantic forms. Ultimately, I judge a work of mine to have been at least partly successful if it can stimulate feelings or sensations similar to that which one might experience when looking at a dusty sunset over dry lake bed or at the complex skeletal remains of some strange desert plant.”

- Andrew Lincoln Nelson

# Andrew Lincoln Nelson

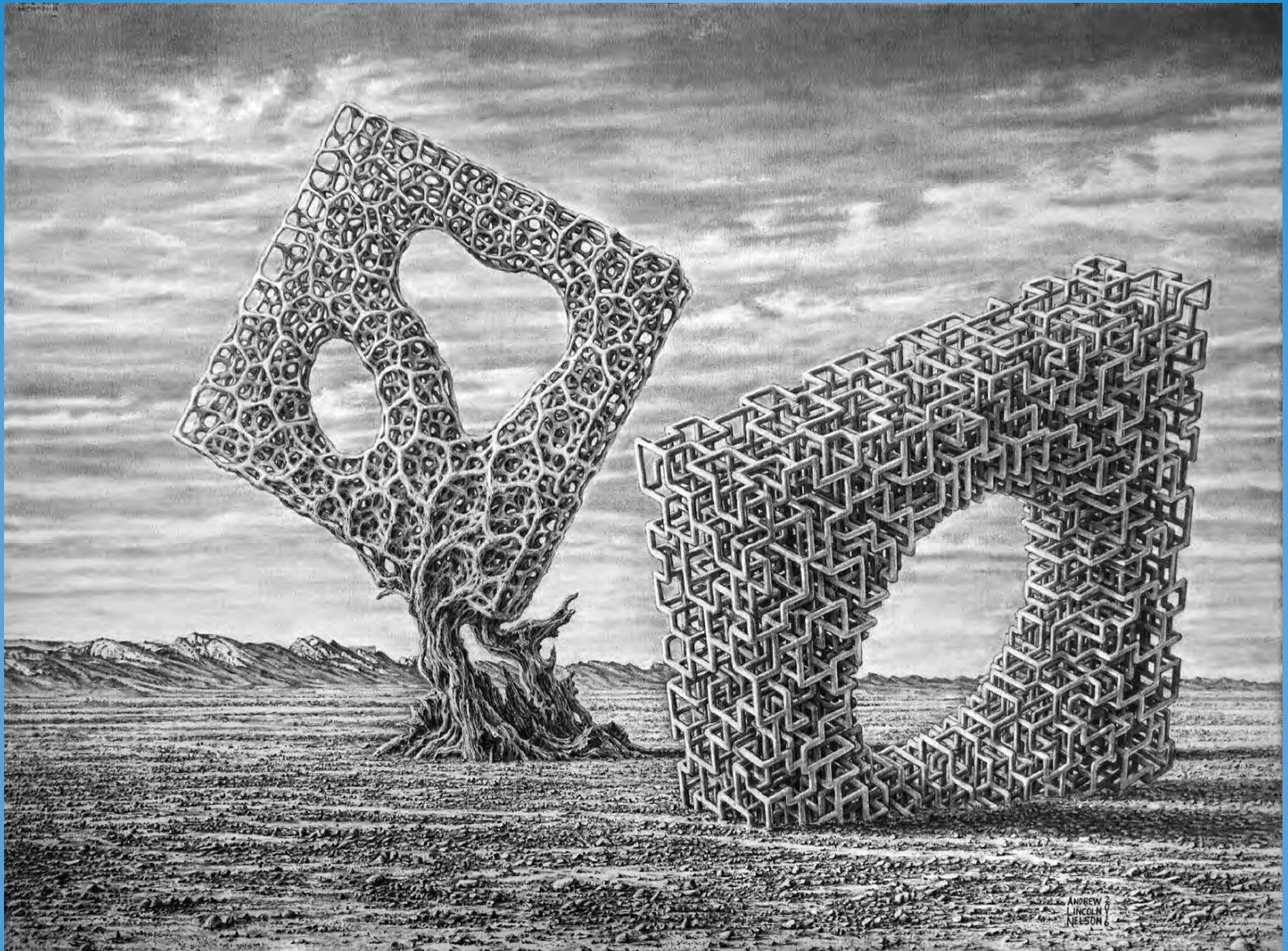
Tucson Artist



**“Phyto Borg 3”**  
**Graphite on Bristol Board**  
**18 x 24**  
**2016**

# Andrew Lincoln Nelson

Tucson Artist



**“Phyto Borg 4”**  
**Graphite on Bristol Board**  
**18 x 24**  
**2016**

# A poem by Sandy Eisenstadt

## Empty Nester

© 2018

Raising them to move out on their own  
Still dreading the day they leave  
So long since being on your own  
Apprehensive and fearful  
Telling yourself you'll be alright  
Looking for things to do  
Maybe adopt a pet, join a club, rearrange the house, or get a hobby  
Finally, the day arrives the last of the children leave  
It's hard to say goodbye even with the new dog by your side  
House seems so empty and bare  
When did it get so big?



The poet writes: "I am originally from Scranton, Pennsylvania, a small town located in northeastern Pennsylvania. I have lived in Tucson, Arizona, for over 30 years. I attended Keystone Junior College and Temple University. I graduated from Temple University and studied creative writing while attending Temple. I am currently a member of a poetry writing group here in Tucson. In addition to writing, I also enjoy abstract painting. My e-mail address is [appraiser-2@hotmail.com](mailto:appraiser-2@hotmail.com)."

# In The Remembering

By Jill Pierce

© 2018

Is Uncle Rick's birthday in February? Or maybe March, or September. Isn't it funny the first thoughts that enter our mind immediately after someone dies? Why did I concern myself with the date of his birth? Perhaps my mind was protecting me from feeling the loss of him. Instead of thinking of his sense of humor or his generosity, I wondered if he was a Pisces or a Virgo. Pisces, it turns out. There would be no funeral, so memorial service, only a handful of Facebook posts by his daughter to mark his passing. "The nurse gave me permission to get in bed with him. I kissed him on the cheek and told him it was okay to go. He took one breath and was gone." Hundreds of "thoughts and prayers" from well-wishers dotted her social media page. I was left to my own devices to remember him, mourn him, honor him.

For the rest of the day, I remembered the favorite uncle from my childhood. While I went about Saturday chores, I shut off the vacuum in mid suck to tell my husband an Uncle Ricky story. How, when I was fourteen, he came for a visit and took me to a department store in the city, handed me two, hundred dollar bills and said, "Have fun. I don't want change." For a farm kid in the eighties, \$200 might as well have been a thousand. I bought fancy boots, and a long coat, and a sweater, and the jeans everyone was wearing, and gourmet chocolate malted balls, the kind that had more chocolate than malt. And I didn't bring him change

"He flew to town once with no luggage," I told my husband. "My mom, my brother and I picked him up at Sea-Tac and he didn't even pack drawers. He said, 'We gotta stop at K-Mart.' We went to K-Mart and he sent my brother and me after socks and underwear and my mother after shirts while he bought pants."

He was the coolest person ever. I mean, who traveled without clothes?

\*\*\*

I was in the drive-thru line at Whataburger just after dawn on a hot Tucson summer morning, my truck's air conditioner railing against the already oppressive heat. Should I get only the breakfast burrito, or clog more arteries and get hash browns, too? My phone rang. "Grandma died last night," my dad declared. It wasn't a surprise, but the finality of it still sent shock waves through me. I drove forward and stopped at the speaker under the menu. Clogged arteries, please, and a large Coke.

I was luckier than most. I was 46 years old before I lost a grandparent. I was 46 years old before I attended a funeral, before I mourned someone whose loss created an emptiness in my life. I felt like an emotional adolescent, unequipped to find my way in an adult world where everyone, it seemed, knew how to cope with death. At my first funeral, I had to eulogize my grandmother and try to sum up her 97-year life in under ten minutes.

Her funeral was a stoic Catholic affair in a church she hadn't attended in the past several years. The priest who presided didn't know her from Jane Adams. Grandma's grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews sat in silence as the priest offered religious rhetoric from his carbon-copied speech with "insert name here" written in italics. My stomach rolled as I anticipated standing at the dais behind the microphone. My last public speaking engagement was no doubt in college, where I likely gave a talk on how to prepare a horse for competition. I earned a C grade. Grandma deserved better than

Continued on page 34



Jill lived in Tucson for 25 years, but life took her back to her roots in northwest Washington State, where she traded her Arizona tan for webbed feet and her flip-flops for rain boots. She was recently accepted into the Master of Fine Arts in Writing program at Pacific University in Portland, Oregon, and is looking forward to honing her writing skills. Jill lives in the Seattle area with her husband, John, two lazy Boxers, and a bratty cat. She can be reached at [jillpierce82@gmail.com](mailto:jillpierce82@gmail.com).

a C student.

My cousins laughed, then cried when I recalled all our favorite Grandma stories. Her competitive spirit fueled her passion for Scrabble, in which her record was approximately 724-0. She rode on the back of a motorcycle when she was 95. She was a teetotaler who could get tipsy by sniffing a wine cork. One Christmas, she'd received a nutcracker that worked by screwing a vice down onto a nut. After tasting wine brought by a guest, she broke the gift, tossed it aside and said, "Oh, who wants to screw nuts anyway?"

After the service, all of her loved ones looked at black and white photos of her childhood and slides of her vacations. We reminisced about stories we all remembered. Playing basketball as kids in her barn, rolling in the hay loft and trying to come in the house covered in straw. She'd grab her broom and sweep us off. Grandkids remembered her pancakes. Great-grandkids remembered her pies.

I secretly remembered the hurtful times. Grandma had mellowed a bit as she aged. I wondered if the other grandkids drove to her house when they were 16 and sporting a new driver's license, only to be turned away because she didn't want to be bothered. Were they afraid to tell her they were scared of the weird shadows on the guest room wall when they spent nights in her cold house, because they knew a comforting hug wouldn't come? Maybe, like me, they chose to remember the older, softer, Grandma. It was in the remembering that made her who she was, different for each of us.

\*\*\*

I wonder where I'll be when I get the news of my mom's passing. It will be sooner, rather than later, I fear. Will I get the privilege of being at her side, helping her leave this life, telling her it is okay to go? Or will I be sitting in my home, or grocery shopping, or waiting in line for fast food?

I expected longevity from my mother, to live well into her 80s at least. What reality has given me is a mother who lives day to day with a chronic and debilitating disease. At the age of 78, she doesn't know if she's 78, or 83, or if it's Tuesday or Friday. Trump could be president, or maybe Bush. When I visit her house, she asks if she can help me in the kitchen, because she forgets that she can't walk or stand.

We won't have a funeral or memorial service. I'll be left to my own devices to remember her, mourn her, honor her. Which mother will I remember? I've already mourned the mom I had as a child. The mother who seemed, for all appearances, to be a loving and kind parent. I lost that mother the first time her words pierced me like a viper's fang and her venom chipped away at my already cracked self-worth. Until I was well into my 30s, I believed I was the daughter of two sane parents. But

I had become, in the time it took her to utter an accusation too hideous to acknowledge, the child of a crazy woman.

I will mourn a recent memory when I was volunteered to be her temporary caregiver while my dad took a much-needed fishing vacation. My 77-year-old father had been taking care of her all day, every day, for months. He deserved a break. I didn't relish the thought of taking down her drawers, sitting her on the toilet and wiping her butt. But I put on my big girl panties, squared my shoulders and thought, I can do this. She wiped my butt, I'll wipe hers. It was the first time in my life I'd be completely responsible for the well-being of another human being.

Six hours into my mom-sitting duty, she ended up on the floor. My bad. I didn't know she needed explicit instructions on how to sit down. I rounded up my brother and a neighbor to help lift her back into her recliner. It was going to be a long week.

On the third day, she had a particularly bad day, a day in the life of Lewy Body Dementia. Her mind/body connection was broken and she didn't have the strength to move from the wheelchair to the sofa. It was all on me to figure out a way to move her.

"This is what we're going to do. You're going to put your arms around my neck. I'm going to put my arms around your waist and together we'll stand you up." It sounded good. In theory.

I miscalculated her hefty weight and my waning strength, and by the time I dropped her onto the sofa, her body was twisted and catawampus. She leaned to the left. I needed her leaned to the right. Her oversized butt perched precariously on the edge of the sofa and she was dangerously close to sliding onto the floor. The look on her face said, "What are you going to do now?" Surprisingly, she wasn't angry, but seemed to enjoy going along for the ride.

Pillows. I need pillows. I'll put them behind her back, prop her up, reposition her, and get her laid down. I wiped the sweat from my forehead and went to the bedroom to find pillows.

I walked into the living room carrying three of the fattest pillows I could find.

"What are you going to do with those?"

"Well, I'm going to use two of them to prop you up, and I'm going to hold the other one over your face." Chalk it up to sleep deprivation and physical exhaustion, but I decided to test her usually lackluster sense of humor. I expected her to say, "You'd just love that, wouldn't you?" Instead she laughed. We laughed. I fell onto the sofa next to her in a fit of giggles. My hands had a new gentleness with her when I positioned her fragile body so she'd be comfortable.

### Continued from page 34

How will I remember her? Will I remember the woman at 78, who has been mellowed by time, age, and disease? Will I remember the time I called her recently, unable to speak except in sobs, to tell her my husband had terminal cancer? The part of her that remembered how to mother, how her daughter's voice sounded when she was suffering, said softly, "Let me turn down the TV so I can hear every word you say." She returned to the mom of my youth, the mom who sat on my bed with me while I cried about whatever teenage angst seemed important at the time.

Will I remember the woman at 39, who was mired in psychotherapy to deal with her own mother issues? She saved her anger, then, only for my father. Friends, family, even my brother and I saw a façade of kindness and compassion. When her anger became bigger than her control, I was the next lucky recipient. My brother was always spared her wrath, but the reasons are a story for another time.

She'll be remembered by grandchildren, nieces and nephews as kind, generous, always there with fresh-baked cookies and a hug. We will mourn completely different women upon her passing.

I have spent the majority of my adulthood consciously trying to not be her. I haven't gotten a room at the Hotel Haldol and checked my shoelaces at the front desk. Well, at least not yet. I didn't have children because the cycle of rage had to stop, and the anger she pre-installed in me didn't make good mother material. I make a decision, every single day before I set foot out of bed, that I will choose to be kind, to be soft, to not weaponize my words. And to forgive her for hardwiring me to be the opposite.

It's in the remembering that I will heal our fractured relationship, because it can't be mended in the here and now. We are too far apart on who she thinks she is, versus who I believe she is, to meet in the middle. I will, however, be at her side when the time comes, to kiss her cheek and tell her it's okay to go.

# The Scattering

## By Kerry Bennett

© 2018

Today is November 8, 2012. Early this morning, as I sat on my balcony, the Jamaica Inn was quiet and so was the sea. I watched a worker methodically raking the beach sand in neat rows, as you would cut the lawn with a hand mower. Another lined up lounge chairs two by two beneath the almond trees. It was warm and humid. I didn't know exactly where or how I would do it, but I knew it would be today, on what would have been her eighty-fifth birthday.

My mother died in September, 2011, after suffering from ovarian cancer for four years. A cheerful, upbeat, and practical person, she planned all this. Even long before her death, my mom told me she wanted to be cremated. An avid Detroit Tigers fan, she wanted a celebration of life at the big clubhouse in the Florida retirement community where she lived instead of a funeral (which we had), and wanted everyone to sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" at the end of it (which we did). And she wanted me to scatter her ashes here at the Jamaica Inn in Ocho Rios, where she and her second husband had honeymooned and vacationed many times. So here I am.

The Jamaica Inn is a lovely old property, a gracefully British colonial place with a lush green manicured lawn, where tables are set with real silver and linen. Where until not long ago, waiters wore white gloves and white jackets. The Queen stayed here once. So did Marilyn Monroe.

I've never opened the box in which my mother's "cremains" are stored. The 8x8x8-inch cardboard cube was sealed and certified by the crematorium when I received it, and the official documents were taped to the box. I was warned that I would have to leave the box sealed in order to travel by plane. The box has had a place of honor ever since I took it home. It has become part of my life, in a way. When I thought my house

was burning up (it was just the dry leaves that a bird had used to line its nest inside the front entryway light), I ran next door with the box and asked Janet to "hold on to my mother" while the fire trucks came screaming up the drive. I think I will miss the box once I return home from this trip.

As I've shared my plans with the people I've met along the way, so many of them have given me their suggestions and shared their own experiences.

My friend Chickie lost her husband ten years ago. When she scattered his ashes in the Atlantic Ocean off the Jersey shore, she told me, they sparkled like diamonds in the sun, and then she saw a rainbow.

Brian, the driver who so skillfully navigated the 1-1/2 hour ride from Montego Bay to Ocho Rios, suggested I set the ashes on a rock overlooking the water and simply let the winds scatter them. Water was the source of life, he reminded me. Brian also told me I should celebrate her birthday. "Get a cake with candles," he said.

Patrice works in the bar at the inn and has a beautiful smile. She brought a Planter's Punch to my room soon after I arrived yesterday. A Rastafarian, Patrice very much believes it is important to keep the ceremony a private, quiet moment, away from other guests. She suggested I get up very early in the morning before anyone was on the beach.

The security inspector at the airport tested the outside of the box to ensure that it didn't contain explosives. Obviously he's done this many times. He carefully took the box out of my carry-on bag. I felt better knowing that doing this is not as uncommon as I had thought. "I lost my mom two months ago," he explained. He tells me that he and his 12 siblings divided

Continued on page 37



Kerry Bennett writes creative nonfiction and poetry, including memoirs about growing up in the 1960s and '70s as well as travel narratives. Her poetry has been published in *Unstrung*. Kerry grew up in Michigan and spent a number of years on the East Coast. She now lives in Flagstaff, where her day job is in marketing communications for Northern Arizona University's research enterprise. You can email Kerry at [kerryb41@aol.com](mailto:kerryb41@aol.com).

### Continued from page 36

up her ashes among them into “to go” bags. Some of her ashes were scattered, he says, while some are being kept in urns and other special places. I’m again reminded how much I like being the only child. I would not want to share.

When I talked with one of the Jamaica Inn’s owners about my plans, he said that many people who’ve visited ask that their ashes be scattered here. I have official permission; Mom would have insisted on that.

The logistics of “the scattering” are finally becoming real. This afternoon I surveyed the beach, which is set inside a small cove. At the western edge of the cove, several large rocks line the beach, covered with coral. The water splashes up on the rocks. It would be a good place, I decided. Now I know where.

I check the tide tables on my phone for Ocho Rios tides. The next high tide will be at 5:25 p.m., and the sun will set at 5:40. Now I know when.

Since it is her birthday, after all, I go to the front desk and ask for a small cake with a candle to be delivered to my table at dinner.



After dinner, back on the beach, I use a broken stick to scrawl “Happy Birthday, Mom!” in the sand, and the shape of a big heart.

It is time. I finally open the box. Inside is a clear, sturdy plastic bag closed with a twisty tie. I had always assumed that the ashes would be gray and a little bit chunky, like the ashes in the fireplace, but these are powdery, the color of the sand beneath my feet.

With the high tide, the water flows over and around the rocks in the reef, forming a temporary channel. Although the water is still fairly shallow along the reef’s edge, the force of the water and the way the sand shifts makes it hard to wade in gracefully. I lurch forward, keenly aware of how sharp the coral is here and how easy it would be to fall.

I make my way carefully about ten feet from the water’s edge until I find the right spot between the rocks. The churning current will be strong enough here to take the ashes out to sea. Plastic bag in hand, I undo the twisty tie and stick it into a pocket of the cover-up I am wearing over my bathing suit.

The bag is now open, the ashes ready to become part of the ocean. I look inside. The sandy powder is the consistency of talc, fine and smooth. I notice a few white flecks of what I suddenly realize is bone, or maybe teeth, mixed in with the powdery substance, and now I fully understand what I am holding in my hands. My mother’s ashes, my mother’s bones.

I lift the bag and begin to slowly pour its contents into the foaming surf. The ashes float on the swirling water and some cling to the rock. I keep pouring as the water around my feet becomes cloudy, as if with silt.

Although I hadn’t prepared anything specific, everything I had thought of saying at this moment has left me. I can’t even remember the words to the Lord’s Prayer or the lyrics to “Jamaica Farewell.” I am speechless, and realize maybe it is supposed to be this way. I am in the moment, watching the ashes as they are scattered by wind and water. After I empty the bag, I bend down to rinse it out several times, to be sure there is nothing of my mother left inside. I stand there for a little while, as the sun begins to set and the cloudy water runs clear, until it feels like the scattering is done.

# Annalisa Feliz Loevenguth

Tucson Artist



“Xiongmao Cove”

Mixed media

24”x16”

Oct. 16, 2016



The artist writes: “Ever since I can remember, my head has always been stuck in the world of storytelling. It has always been my intent to show people what I see, breathe, and feel. Creating this mixed-media style allows me to look inside myself and tell the stories I want to tell. Deep inside us all is a story waiting to be heard and shared with others. I dare you to tell your tale. Over the years, I have experimented with many different mediums, which has allowed me to develop my own style. There are no rules to this art form, it can be whatever I want it to be. The art has a way of inventing itself. This all began when I entered the world of print and graphic design. Whenever I see print and textures used in design projects, I want to somehow incorporate them into my own works. So I began my search for the right paper and accessories to make my pieces one-of-a-kind. Now I am an independent artist creating works for clients around the world to enjoy.” Her website is [liveincoloronline.com](http://liveincoloronline.com). The artist can be reached at [aloevenguth@gmail.com](mailto:aloevenguth@gmail.com).

# Annalisa Feliz Loevenguth

Tucson Artist



**“Adventure Jane”**  
Mixed media  
7”x24”  
Aug. 14, 2017

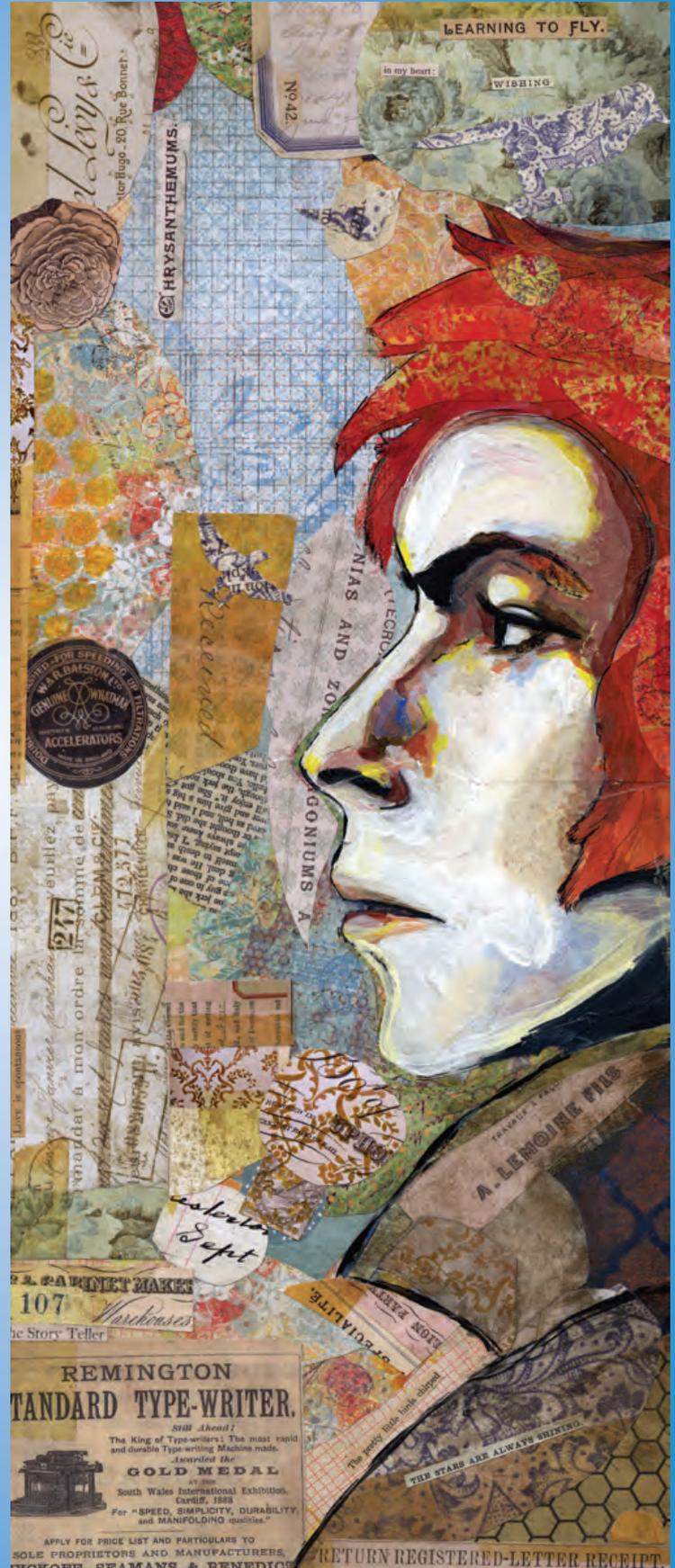
**“As a creative artist who has been recognized as having an authentic talent in whimsical art, I try to make each painting convey a new adventure. Images and stories pour out of my mind onto each fresh canvas, with passion to push the envelope using my art history to channel inspiration.”**

**- Annalisa Feliz Loevenguth**

# Annalisa Feliz Loevenguth

Tucson Artist

**“Blue Bird”**  
Mixed media  
10”x24”  
Nov. 16, 2017



# Annalisa Feliz Loevenguth

Tucson Artist



**“Mother Nature”**  
Mixed media  
9”x15”  
Nov. 6, 2016

# Annalisa Feliz Loevenguth

Tucson Artist



**"Paper Crane"**  
Mixed media  
24"x24"  
Jan. 29, 2017

# A poem by Alex R. Encomienda

## A Timely Effort to Interpret the Pain of Salvation

© 2018

There are so many years to go as I inspect  
What looms to my face; mother's palms in silken flesh,  
The sound is so loud; all of these voices are calling for me  
To understand,  
That I am now a child of two and my voice is loud,  
The look between mother and I: healthy – observant!  
For a moment I forget who I am but then she voices once again  
Adam; and I am now seven with thoughts and wishes.  
The coil is different; I no longer am afraid  
Of the bedside rituals mother spoke of but seldom;  
I am lost with no perception of where I was,  
So I fret and run to mother wearing the face of childhood craze,  
The look between mother and I: healthy – reciprocal,  
And then she sways and sings of myths.  
For seven years where have I been?  
Each time I slumber the bedroom rows as if  
I am on a boat sailing nowhere to be nothing,  
Just like all the rest of these people sighing to bed.  
I am now twenty seven and have stumbled in life,  
For my dreams and my wishes; I am a slave.  
Things have changed dramatically since birth  
And still I have not found my way.  
So many years have passed since I proclaimed my innocence.  
I dreamed last night of a time long ago where I was just an acorn  
Humbled and amazed by the river flows, the earth of soil and salt,  
But an eccentric little passerine came to me and mouthed:  
We are the voices of the earth communicating through barriers.

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The poet writes: "My name is Alex Rafael Encomienda and I am a writer of fiction and poetry. I started writing at the age of nine and began reading at age six. In elementary school I participated in book clubs and reading contests and went to college where I attended writing workshop classes and lecture classes taught by established authors such as Jana Bomersbach and Dave Neilson. I have self-published several short stories and poetry works and created a portfolio of my material for future endeavors. I currently have a collection of over 200 poems."

**Continued from page 43**

And with an exceptional look of perplexity, I scoffed!  
The world assumes the role of a peasant for one minute,  
I proceed to inspect him from head to toe; only he is fleeting.  
Life: fantastic! Enigma of perpetuity ... 'tis me, Adam.  
A journey from the beginning occurs and it is loud and massive,  
The tales from my bedside seep through the firmament and now  
They are alive in the form of a beacon.  
Falling up without a sky,  
Screaming without a sound,  
Venturing the smallest plane,  
Running in reverse,  
Whispering with no voice yet  
Speaking to the breathing ground,  
Feeling without a body the wounds of sleepless eyes,  
Circling the world and never finding a thing,  
Just to realize it is all but a second  
In the mind of a seeker,  
So I give myself to mother beckoning childhood craze  
And the look between mother and I: thoughtful ... eternal.

# Crying Wolf: Fear and Safety Amid Nature

By Chris Stidley

© 2018

With the shower door closed, I lifted my face to catch the hot spray and let the water cascade over me. I sighed, enjoying a brief respite before making dinner.

And then I turned.

Startled, I paused.

And then I screamed.

I followed this with a longer cry of anguish.

And then embarrassment flooded over me. My daughter, home from school for the holidays, ran down the hall. Soon she was standing next to me, as I, wrapped in my thick navy blue towel, rained over the bathroom floor. I reached back into the shower to turn off the water, and together we peered down at the wolf spider lurking in a corner.

\*\*\*

I'm not afraid of spiders, not even the wolf spider with its 1-inch body. These arachnids frequent our backyard, along with the larger tarantulas.

I've often come to the rescue of both my daughter and the spiders she finds in the house. Using a small food storage container, I trap these intruders and return them to the outdoors.

A couple scorpions also have found their way into our house. One scorpion, found in the middle of my closet, became a quick victim of the combination of a handy shoe and a Saltillo tile floor.

On the trails surrounding Tucson, I come across snakes during hikes and runs. When a snake poked its head out from the base of a prickly pear, I lengthened my stride in midair to hurdle it. The snake silently turned back on its path, revealing the pointed tail of a gopher snake rather than a stubby rattle. For the remaining miles of my run, I switched to a heightened yellow alert and marveled that sticks are clever for evolving to look like snakes.

\*\*\*

“We can never have enough of nature,” Henry David Thoreau wrote.

Well, not “never,” especially when naked during a shower. But I agree with Thoreau's assertion that “we need the tonic of wildness.”

While I have my boundaries, wildlife needs its safe space. “If people persist in trespassing upon the grizzlies' territory, we must accept the fact that the grizzlies, from time to time, will harvest a few trespassers,” Edward Abbey wrote. While human deaths from bear encounters are few, bears are killed for harassing the trespassers. Nature can get in the way of the interlopers enjoying nature.

We, humans and wildlife, all want some space, along with its wildness tonic.

\*\*\*

After I captured my wolf spider and secured it in a dry plastic container, I resumed my shower. Later, the spider was back to wandering. Outside.



Chris Stidley writes about science and life. After many years as a professor of biostatistics, she is now a graduate student in journalism at the University of Arizona.

# The Treetops Below

By Laura Fuchs

© 2018

I was born on the edge of a swamp. Before you get the shivers, it's actually a national wildlife refuge, the Great Swamp, in northeastern New Jersey. Created by a prehistoric glacier, the basin has since drained. I lived in mucky muck. Even after a mild spring rain, the ground squished beneath my galoshes. A short exhale brought visible breath. Days were dank, dreary and most often drizzly. I craved a sunny summer sky.

Yet these miserable wet days were the reason this ecosystem had formed. As a swollen Passaic River coursed through the Watchung Mountains, the basin collected its flow. The swampy landscape enveloped a variety of animals and vegetation. It was their home ... and my home.

A massive oak towered above me in my backyard. I gauged the seasons by its colors, shadows and surface. Like a slow chameleon, it changed its pigments in fall. As the Earth tilted and sunlight hours grew shorter, winter obscured its silhouette. When the branches became covered with squirrels, birds and raccoons, spring had nourished its body. Summer was its cherished season.

\*\*\*

I was 10 when I noticed that my yard was sinking. On a warm July day, a run and stumble over uneven ground brought me flat-faced onto the grass. I opened my eyes and looked up at my oak staring boldly down. I sensed a mission. What was underground?

I got up and slowly began to dig. A shovel from the shed aided my efforts.

Immune to my surroundings, except for the massive hole I had created, I did not hear my mother yelling from the kitchen

window.

I finally peered up through dirt-clogged senses to hear a tirade of questions about my sanity. "You had better fill that back in when you're done," she said.

I felt the mighty oak still watching. I knew that I must keep going.

I then hit something. The hole revealed a rotting tree, another oak. I wavered.

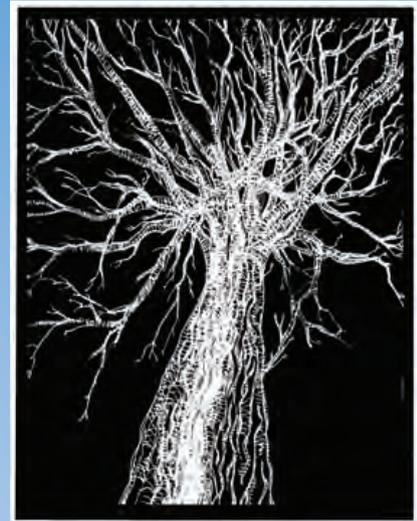
Should I run in and get my mom?

I eagerly showed her what I had found. We decided that it was best to refill the hole, and she stomped back into the house.

I looked up one more time before I began. Did my oak want to see the buried, dead tree? We stood in silence and mourned her kindred friend.

Later that evening, we concluded that the builder had bulldozed and buried the giant tree because it was in the way of a new housing development. No more growth rings would it make. It had to go.

For more than a decade, my oak had taken up the extra task of housing the opossum, raccoons and birds that had survived the upheaval. Too many trees had been bulldozed, and habitats were shrinking. I am thankful that the Great Swamp has been a refuge for these species since 1960. I hope my oak is still watching.



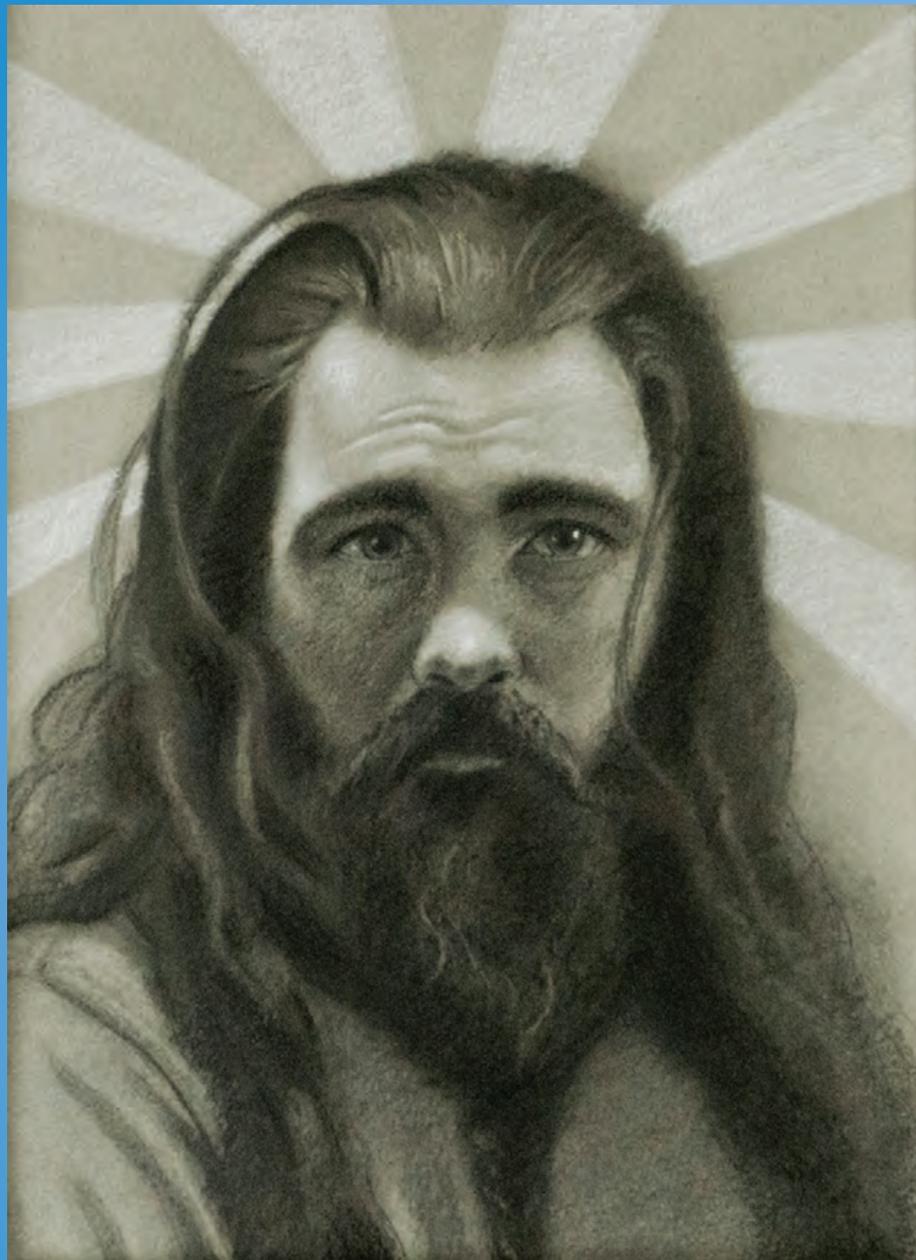
Ink drawing by Gary Morrison.



Laura was born in New Jersey where it seemed to always be raining. She could take the train to New York City on a Monday and bike to a nearby farm on a Tuesday. She moved to Tucson in 1978 to attend the University of Arizona, where she graduated with a degree in Biology. While working in a pathology lab at University Medical Center, she obtained an MS in Genetics. After decades of microscopy and helping to diagnose cancer, Laura is now a graduate student in the School of Journalism at the University of Arizona, where she plans to specialize in scientific writing.

# Chris Harris

Mesa Artist



**“I R Teh Artist”**

**Charcoal and white chalk on toned paper**

**9”x12”**

**2017**

On the title, “I R Teh Artist,” the artist explains: “It’s sort of a little joke on how people react to me when they hear I am an artist, then have their expectations dashed after they see my body of work.”



In the sweltering heat of the Arizona desert, where saguaros thrive and tumbleweeds are plentiful, Christopher Harris resides in his Mesa home where he creates art under the watchful eyes of his assistants: two fat, adorable cats named Crystal and Stormy. He has participated in several group exhibitions as well as having been published multiple times in the “Gila River Review,” an online literary journal at Chandler-Gilbert community college; and “Around the Ben,” an online literary journal at the Benedictine University. He also won Best Community College 2D Work in the Masters of Tomorrow Art Scholarship Contest in 2014. A recent graduate, having received a bachelor’s degree in fine arts from the Benedictine University Mesa Campus, he hopes to continue his education and obtain a master’s degree in order to pursue his desire to become an art instructor. Artists who inspire him include: William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Peter Paul Rubens, John Singer Sargent, Donato Giancola, David Gray and Wylie Beckert. His website’s is [artofchrisharris.com](http://artofchrisharris.com). He can be reached by email at [chrisharrisartist@gmail.com](mailto:chrisharrisartist@gmail.com).

# Chris Harris

Mesa Artist



**“Tea Cups and Eggs”**

**Oil on canvas panel**

**9”x12”**

**2016**

“My drive to create is as primal as my need to hunt for food, seek out shelter, claim my territory, and all the other mammalian instincts that we humans are blessed with. It is the fine, subtle nuances found in a masterful stroke of a paint brush, or the carefully laid out lines of a skilled draftsman that speaks to my creative soul, stoking the fires of life from deep within me and inspiring me to take up my tools in an equal, answering call to artistic arms. In my work, I strive to show my love for the art of creating in each line, stroke, and scratch that I lay down on whatever surface I choose to use in order to bring my visions of faithful representation. Never satisfied with doing everything in just one manner, I explore various methods and techniques, experimenting with surfaces and textures, reaching into my artists arsenal for whatever munition that I think best suites each idea before I begin working on each piece as I attempt to quell the creative beast that lurks inside.”

- Chris Harris

# Chris Harris

Mesa Artist



**“Dirty Purty”**

**Pastel pencils on toned paper**

**18”x24”**

**2017**

# Chris Harris

Mesa Artist



**“Leaves Fall”**

**Oil and acrylic ink on etched copper**

**12”x12”**

**2018**

# Chris Harris

Mesa Artist



**“Talisha”**  
Oil on canvas  
18”x24”  
2017

# 16 Hours

By B.M. Di Gregorio

© 2018

The wall was crawling that day. She could see the slight paint globs and indentations casting subtle shadows all over the surface as she stared at it, seated across the room. There were all sorts of small chips in the wall that she hadn't noticed before. In her mind they formed faces of all varieties, misshapen and groaning. She had to see them; if she imagined, maybe she would stop fidgeting.

It had been 14 hours.

She glanced toward her closet, then back at the wall. More cracks winding up the wall like snakes. She felt the need to get up and pace, take a walk around the neighborhood maybe, but she was somehow frozen to her uncomfortable wooden chair. It creaked as she shifted, eyes darting around the room and inevitably back to the closet. Not that her closet was so terribly interesting that she couldn't tear her eyes away from it no matter how badly she wanted to, like a skin deformity in public. Her closet simply contained her personal bogeyman, a quiet and uninteresting monster, but deadly nonetheless.

As if shocked by an electric bolt, she suddenly rose from her chair, swung open the closet door, and grabbed the mostly full bottle of tequila and a large ziplock bag. Without hesitating, she walked quickly through her living room and out the front door. She walked right up to the curb and tossed the assorted paraphernalia into the trash bin. Practically all in the same motion, she swiveled on her heel and returned to her room.

The wall made faces at her again. There, she thought, the closet is empty. But in the back of her mind, she took solace in knowing the trash collectors would not come until 6 a.m., which meant she had four hours to rescue her beloved. Four hours to resist, or to make the previous 14 feel meaningless.

She couldn't rest; she knew where the trash was, and

the liquor store, and the bar, and the corner store, and the pharmacy, and her friends. Four hours? She faced an eternity! At this point, she would have reached for a pack of smokes, but she gave that up too. This was a hopeful cold-turkey quit of everything, and nothing could spoil it worse than dipping her toes in even the shallowest water. There was always a strong current that would carry her back.

She tried opening a book, abandoning the wall and with it (she hoped) the urge to dumpster dive. Her thoughts meandered to wondering when it was exactly that she went astray. She was always a charming kid, she'd thought, talented and motivated. What went wrong? The era before substances was lost to her, and with it her charisma and drive, she thought. To her, the bottle was medicine for the pathologically nostalgic, a few hours' solace from overthinking.

The words on the book's pages were startlingly hollow, so much so that she could barely comprehend them. Time passed but she was on the same page — no, paragraph — for nearly half an hour. She walked into the kitchen and ate a tomato with mozzarella, but felt sick to her stomach. She couldn't go out because she knew she'd drink. I should have poured the goddamn bottle out first, she thought. Who was she kidding? She kept the bottle's integrity intact because she wanted the option to be there, to feel the temptation and ultimately give in to it. At least then, when she fished the booze out of the dumpster in a humiliating act of defeat, she could at least say she had tried.

In an act of desperation, she washed three melatonin pills down her throat and lay on her bed, declining to watch a movie as she usually did because she read somewhere that blue light

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Brandon Di Gregorio was born and raised in Charleston, West Virginia, the largest town in the state that is still only 15 minutes away from very rural hollers and rugged wilderness. After attending school at Earlham College in Indiana (during which he spent a semester in and out of Mexico and Tucson), Brandon decided to return to the Southwest due to a combination of magnetic draw to the area, and a desire to return to the places and people that gave him drive and made a formative impact on his young adult life. Contact Brandon at his current work email, [brandon@higherground.me](mailto:brandon@higherground.me), or at his personal account, [bmdigregorio@gmail.com](mailto:bmdigregorio@gmail.com).

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made it difficult to fall asleep. But her difficulty sleeping ran a little deeper than cutting down on screen time. An hour passed, then two, and she still could not fall asleep. The melatonin barely even made her feel drowsy. It was the first time she'd gone to bed sober in over two months at least — she couldn't quite remember.

Behind her eyelids she pictured a scene from her childhood: the grass and trees a lush green with blossoms unfolding in the bushes; the roar of cicadas warbling out from the woods behind her house; smoke billowing off the grill as her dad cooked steak and asparagus; outdoor metal furniture set up on the patio for a relaxed family dinner.

At 4:02 a.m., she dragged her feet through the living room and out the front door. The crickets whined an echoing chorus, and the air was still and heavy. It was dark and damp. The dumpster was rank with rotting food. There was no emotion, only resignation.

She slammed the door behind her. This time it had been 16 hours.

# And Then There Was Silence

By Lysa Cohen

© 2018

Clouds rose from dark swells to race across the sky, bringing rain that buffeted the land and as waves pounded against the shore before sliding back into the sea. Gulls dove and pitched like paper airplanes, their caws and squawks begging for the mercy of the wind. Just beyond, a small village continued with life, unconcerned with the raging storm. Children filled the sidewalks as they poured from school buildings, their voices raised in laughter. Books in hand and uniforms hidden beneath jumpers and Wellies, they pounced from puddle to puddle. Women ducked into teashops for a quick cup and chat with friends, commenting on the weather. Cars navigated the rain-drenched streets, guided by headlights and luck as they dodged stray children who darted into the street.

A strong gust of wind drove the scent of salt and earth through the village, sweeping past piles of boulders and up the cliff to where a copse of trees fought for purchase on a rocky ledge. Branches folded and rattled like bones in a forgotten graveyard, as leaves shivered in protest of the veracity of the storm. Behind them, a dirt-packed footpath, worn smooth by feet and hardened by time and weather, curved along the cliff face, turning and circling straight down into the neighboring village.

Saoirse didn't feel the bite of the wind as it tore at her woolen coat, nor did she feel the rain that plastered her hair flat against her head. Standing at the cliff's edge, she held her body rigid, hazel eyes fixed over the churning water. Her hands gripped the slick metal rail, the gold of her wedding band glinting in the growing dim.

The cliff walk was silent that afternoon, save the steady beat of raindrops against the dirt and rock and shrieking of wind through the trees. As soon as the storm abated, it would be

filled with afternoon walkers, but for now she was thankful for the isolation.

Behind her, a wrought-iron bench that had seen a century of storms huddled beneath the protection of an outcropping of metal and fiberglass. She collapsed onto the bench and pulled her knees to her chest. Her cheek came to rest on the sharp blade of her knee as her eyes closed and she embraced the icy chill. As the storm raged around her, she struggled to hold back tears. If she had not seen it with her own eyes, she would never have believed it possible. A lifetime of promises and memories abandoned for momentary satisfaction. How could so much be sacrificed so quickly?

And yet it had been.

Saoirse hadn't planned on going home during her lunch hour—she never had before. Unfortunately, a misstep and a full pot of tea had made a clean set of clothes necessary. Upon reflection, the unfamiliar car parked in front of the flat she shared with her husband should have been the first sign. Shiny and silver, it was nicer than anything she could afford on her salary at the teashop. But it was a job, and she and her husband needed every penny. They had planned on moving out of their tiny home and into something much larger by the end of the year. It was a promise they had made to each other on their wedding day just a couple years before.

The unlocked front door should have been the second clue. She and Liam were fastidious about locking the front door ever since their neighbour's flat had been robbed. Turning her key in the lock, she had frowned at the loose click and pushed open the door. There was a muffled scratch of leather on carpet that masked a sigh as she walked into the living room.

A creak and sigh from the bedroom had her eyes snapping up

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Lysa Cohen holds an M.Ed. in Higher Education Leadership from Northern Arizona University and an M.A. in English and Creative Writing from Southern New Hampshire University. She has traveled extensively, but currently makes her home in Phoenix, Arizona. Her short stories and poems can be found in *Page & Spine*, *The Penman Review* and *The Blue Guitar* literary and arts magazine.

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to the partially opened door.

“Liam?”

Her legs propelled her forward, her eyes never leaving the gaping maw. As she neared, the bed drew into focus. At first, her mind refused to comprehend the scene to which her eyes were frozen. There was a sordid beauty to the writhing mass of flesh and limbs—like a squid floating through clear water, tentacles outstretched in abandon.

She gasped for breath as the air rushed from her lungs. Saoirse took one step backward, then another and another as she ran from the house. There was a rushing in her ears, like the sound of waves crashing.

Raw emotions drove Saoirse from the safety of the bench. Her breath hitched as sobs erupted from deep within her. She didn't bother wiping the tears from her cheeks, letting them run free to mingle with the sopping strands of hair stuck to her cheeks. Around her the storm surged—raged—as it released its vengeance in a fury of rain. She felt none of it as she raced down the path, dodging broken branches and slippery stones. Fabric split and skin tore as she fell more than once on the loose gravel, but the pain only spurred her on. She relished it. Embraced it.

Over and around the cliff path she ran, her feet pounding out a driving rhythm. As the path sloped downward, she lost her footing again, sliding through leaves and mud before landing against a large boulder.

Then everything else stopped.

The storm subsided as quickly as it had begun. Rain faded to a drizzle, before ceasing. The winds died, and within moments, the sea was once again calm.

The silence came in a vacuum, as if all the energy had been pulled up and out of the sky. Saoirse became aware of the blood running from the cuts and scrapes on her knees and shins. She pushed herself to her feet, wincing at the pain in her hands. When she looked at her palms, all she saw was the dull gold of her wedding ring beneath layers of muck.

She pulled in a shuttered breath and yanked the ring from her finger, only stared at it for several moments. She examined every whirl and curl in the band with the tip of her finger. In her mind's eye, she watched Liam slide it onto her finger, felt its weight like a promise of a lifetime of love and fidelity. Closing her hand around the band, she looked north, to where she had come. Then, she looked south, to the small town where her parents lived.

It wasn't an ideal solution. There would be questions—questions Saoirse didn't want to answer. But, her parents would provide a safe haven as she figured out how to put her life back together. Her mother would smother her in hugs and food. Her father would go with her to the flat she had shared with Liam to help pack her things.

Her head bobbed forward in a decisive nod and she walked the few steps to where a thick metal rail ran along the edge of the cliff path. She reached out, opened her palm, and watched as the ring dropped into the water far below.

Turning, Saoirse followed the curving trail around the cliff and took the path down into the village.

# Finding the Gray Ghost

By Kellie Sheehan

© 2018

I could have killed my dinner for tonight, but I let him live another day.

I can recall a dream of the perfect shot being released from my own hands into the body of one of God's creatures, yet here I am going over every hour of preparation, questioning if I did enough to be ready for meeting the gray ghost. I know that finding the ghost is an accomplishment most hunters only dream of because they are one of the hardest creatures to successfully hunt in southern Arizona. You must be equally as hidden, quiet and elusive as they are. You must become a ghost yourself.

For six days I have been looking for this gray ghost among every mountainside with desirable living conditions that supply shelter, food and access to water. I wake up before the sun and stay out until the moon. Just as I have done every day before this one, I gather my bow and arrows and cover every inch of my body in camouflage that resembles the colors and shapes of mesquite trees across the Rincon Mountains. I find a spot under one of the larger mesquites and begin assembling my tripod, spotting scope, binoculars and range finder, just as I have done a hundred times before. Then I sit back into the tree, far enough to break up my human figure. I bring my binoculars up to my eyes and begin the search.

Finally, I find one.

When he first captures the attention of my wandering eyes, he is walking east across the mountain. I pick up my range finder, set the crosshairs on the ghost and wait until it tells me that 143 yards lie between me and filling my freezer with fresh meat for the year.

I begin planning the path I will take to close in on the gray ghost. I will cross the hill to the northwest and come up behind

him. I will use the rock face on the next hill as cover and work the breeze so the ghost won't smell me before he sees me.

100 yards.

64 yards.

51 yards.

Freeze.

The rocks beneath my feet slowly settle between the tread of my boots and the decaying vegetation that crunches each time my legs shake. The gray ghost spots me, or at least I think he does. He lifts his head up from feeding and stares in my direction, trying to piece together my unfamiliar figure. I wait for what feels like a lifetime until my ghost returns to feeding, and I am struck by the grace of God's creation.

With each step I can see his leg muscles tense and relax. His chest expands and retracts, taking in the cool air. I can see his breath expel from his mouth as I try to hold mine. I silently observe each blade of grass he takes into his mouth and the movement of his throat as he swallows it into his gut.

As a hunter, I know now is the time to nock an arrow, set my release and draw back. I should place my sight right behind the crease of his shoulder so I hit vital organs and make a clean kill. Yet my bow remains at my side and my hands lie still as my mind races with flashes of what this deer's life could be.

His antlers display one prominent point on each side, telling me that this buck is young, possibly a fawn from last year. Arizona Game and Fish has no rules against this buck's being killed. To them, it makes no difference if I kill a young buck or one that has survived many hunters.

As a conservationist, I can't help but think how my ghost could look a year from now. Surviving another hunting season would mean he has another chance to pass on his genetic code.

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Kellie Sheehan is the lead educator at the Cooper Center for Environmental Learning (Camp Cooper), where she teaches ecological concepts to students throughout southern Arizona. Born and raised in San Diego, Kellie moved to Tucson to attend the University of Arizona, where she completed a bachelor of science degree in Sustainable Built Environments. She is currently working toward becoming a wildlife biologist. An avid hunter, Kellie prides herself on the sustainable and ethical hunting and processing of wildlife in Arizona to provide meat for her family. Contact the writer at [kellieasheehan@email.arizona.edu](mailto:kellieasheehan@email.arizona.edu).

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His growing antlers could one day raise his status to a trophy buck. My mind raises the question of how could I ethically take a life to sustain my own when this being has barely started life?

Maybe tonight I will dream of the ghost I let slip back into the landscape and disappear as quickly as I found him.

I know I could have had fresh meat for dinner, but I chose to listen to my conscience instead.

# Susan Alden

Phoenix Artist



**“Sitting Bull”**

Acrylic and mixed media

2013



The artist writes: “For over 20 years I have painted scenes of the Southwest—its flora and fauna as well as its landscapes. I am especially fond of wide, open spaces of the American West, as well as its small towns and back roads, where life goes on in a timeless way. I studied art and received my BFA in fine arts from Miami University of Ohio, then traveled to the Hawaiian islands, where I lived aboard a wooden sailboat for six years, cruising the islands and working as a textile designer for the Hawaiian fashion trade. I paint almost exclusively in acrylics, although I enjoy watercolor painting as well. Besides easel paintings, I have completed a public art project in Phoenix for the desert Mission Food Bank, as well as an outdoor mural project for Miami University. My paintings have been featured on a number of products for many years including poster prints, greeting cards and T shirts. I have exhibited in various galleries in the Hawaiian Islands, as well as Scottsdale, Arizona, and the Midwest. The city of Honolulu has purchased one of my paintings.” You may view more of her work at [www.susan-alden-art.com](http://www.susan-alden-art.com). Contact the artist by email at [susan\\_alden@hotmail.com](mailto:susan_alden@hotmail.com).

# Susan Alden

Phoenix Artist



**“Emergence”**  
Acrylic and pen and ink  
28” x 40”  
2012

“I like to combine bold shapes and expressive lines with bright, colors that offer viewers a vibrant visual experience. My flattened use of perspective and graphic shapes embody my signature style, which includes tropical motifs, as well as Native American, Hawaiian, Impressionist and Fauvist influences. People have told me my work seems to vibrate, which sometimes gives it a life of its own. My subject matter is the American West, My pictures rarely represent an actual place, but rather a dream of how a place might be. I use acrylics to capture movement and life — making the brush dance and the colors sing.”

- Susan Alden

# Susan Alden

Phoenix Artist



**"Cactus Cats"**

**Gouache**

**32" x 44"**

**2017**

# Susan Alden

Phoenix Artist



**“Night-Blooming Cactus”**  
8” x 10”  
Watercolor  
2018

# Susan Alden

Phoenix Artist



**“Sonoran Wonderland”**

**32” x 40”**

**Acrylic**

**2013**

# Pine Nut Fireworks

By Zoe Martín

© 2018

**A**sturias was my first love. Among her people, my family was foreign—Madrileños, that sharp-mannered kind from the heart of Spain. But the land treated us like one of her own. Thick, salt-scented air carried by coastal currents to our family farm welcomed us as sweetly on our first day as on our last in the northwestern slopes of Spain. Hospitality characterized the first few months, but we soon were to learn it takes many seasons to gain the trust of those enchanting mountains and their inhabitants.

In December, Asturias puts on her white dress, and pine nuts get tucked under a blanket of fluff. Squirrels, humans and boars alike withdraw to the warmth of their homes. By March, the soft, moist earth pushes seedlings out into the light. Squirrels, humans and boars put out their own young, and we all meet in the forest to play. Clumsy hooves trace convenient paths to sunny meadows and clearings where elderly pines once stood tall. Human families too, fill their niche. Gus, Marco and I further mark the trails with rubber boots, stepping with emphasis in muddy puddles.

At our destination, a rug of half-nibbled pine cones covers the forest floor. Squeaky branches alert us that guilty eyes observe, but we get to work right away. Careful to leave the oldest logs in place, so as not to disturb homes within, we move dead wood into a circle below the thickest canopy we find. With fern leaves we make beds, with eucalyptus bark a roof—a castle in the Kingdom of Pines.

We gather pine cones into an old potato sack. The fat, perfect ones we cover with a bundle of blue eucalyptus leaves. These are toxic to rodents and might keep them away, we reason. Our goal is to store as many pine cones as we can before the squirrels get them. Victorious, we walk home at sundown with smiles across our cheeks and some extra cones for the wood

stove to crack open.

That night I dream of pine nut fireworks. The generosity of pines fills both mind and belly. I am overcome with bewilderment of all that the forest offers us, and am sure now that sharing it with Gus and Marco, my own kin, is the most gratifying way to make use of its gifts.

My chore is to feed the sheep. At morning, I slip on rubber boots and march down to their pen at the edge of the forest. My ruminant friends turn out to have quite the appetite for pine seedlings. The most avid ones have immersed themselves well into the groves, sweeping the forest ground.

After guiding the wanderers back to their shelter, I hurry to the Kingdom of Pines. The absence of seedlings, even in clearings where sunlight warms the earth, worries me. A loud knocking triggers my body to turn toward the improvised fortress, where a tiny orange squirrel hunches over our neat pile of perfect round cones. My instinct tells me to shoo him away, but my body ignores it because I have realized one of the great lessons of pines.

The rodent picks the cone apart, paws gripping either side. Large incisors pick and tug at each scale with the confidence of an expert—thorough but messy. He clumsily lets some nuts roll to the ground while nibbling at others. His tiny head twists side to side between each tug, scanning the forest. It takes him only a couple seconds to detect a small, ragged girl, staring.

Two heart rates speed up exponentially as our gazes meet. With a jolt, he makes for the nearest tree. Stopping at the base, he gets an update on my position and then disappears into the foliage, leaving behind a trail of pine seeds. My muscles become frozen in place. A sweet scent has engulfed my nostrils and captivated my parietal lobe. I can smell the gratitude of

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Zoe Martín is a Spanish-American writer, artist and ethnobotany student currently living in Tucson, Arizona. Contact: [zoemartincowan@email.arizona.edu](mailto:zoemartincowan@email.arizona.edu).

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piners for the squirrels. It dawns on me, then, that the fate of squirrels and pines are woven together like the strands in a rope. Considering that we have no intention of dispersing seeds, it feels wrong to keep all the good pine cones. Dispersing seeds is the gift of squirrels.

I learned on this day that eucalyptus leaves do not keep squirrels away from pine cone stashes. That, I did not share with Gus and Marco.

# 3 poems by Robert Feldman

## The Hebraic Trilogy

### and then I saw the angels (*malach*) (sheltering a child crossing a busy morning street)

© 2018

thus, it is written that we may choose our better angels who inhabit the trees, the stars, the glowing mountains of paradise...  
or, reveal the scribes, we may choose those inferior ones who dwell among the hail, the reptiles, the colossal thunder of  
perdition...

\*\*\*

*malach*...

messengers without names  
creatures of light and spirit,  
conceived from beneficent deeds of balancing humanity's capacity to love  
thus gifted with laughter...  
yet fearing humanity's capacity to deceive  
thus smitten by tears

*malach*...

healers of our scars and our torment  
liberators of our forever struggles,  
immune to tears  
passionate warriors  
*hazzans* of heavenly praise  
masters of forgetfulness  
yet savants of mindfulness

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Born in Paterson, New Jersey, Robert Feldman was inspired at an early age by members of Paterson's literary tradition, most notably Louis and Allen Ginsberg and William Carlos Williams. As a young adult while living in St. Louis, he organized various poetry readings, produced and hosted a community issues news hour and a biweekly bebop jazz radio program on KDNA-FM. It was during this time his interest and admiration for the Beat Generation flourished. Robert was instrumental in publishing some of Arizona's most influential writers such as Drummond Hadley and Michael Gregory, and in 1980, collaborated with Lawrence Ferlinghetti on his Bisbee publication, "Mule Mountain Dreams." During the '80s and '90s, he participated in dozens of poetry readings around the country. Now years later, he continues to write, paint, and play tabla, besides working with high-school students as faculty advisor of the Park Vista Writers Workshop. The body of Robert Feldman's writing and painting can be accessed at [www.albionmoonlight.net](http://www.albionmoonlight.net); he can be reached at [rfeldman@gmail.com](mailto:rfeldman@gmail.com).

*malach...*

cherubim without voices  
seraphim who sing eternal,  
teachers with wings  
and wingless servants pervasive,  
revealers of divine mysteries  
spreading wisdom and insight into ourselves,  
guiding each of us to make our own resolutions  
inspiring each of us to practice our humanity

*malach...*

seraphs embracing gentle relationships  
seraphs witnessing harsh conflicts,  
testing our convictions and choices  
encouraging life's necessary transitions,  
conveying the language of divine energy,  
forever steeped in intentional beauty  
serenading our lives with joyful insights  
for all circumstances...

angels steadfastly resisting any malevolent and vengeful transgressor  
angels faithfully sheltering a young child crossing a busy morning street

*malach* forever remain obvious and evident  
*malach* forever remain unseen and veiled,  
graceful dancers or confused soldiers  
healers yet destroyers  
placid and mindful or stricken with insomnia  
just and merciful yet fearful and afraid  
praiseworthy and peaceful yet filled with terror and fire

each of us has been gifted a voice of free will to determine a way,  
while the *malach*, God's ultimate guardians, remain steadfast to their covenant—  
sheltering us children crossing a busy morning street

# “the very best among us”

© 2018

(dedicated to those 36 *lamed vovniks* who anonymously dwell among us)

36 untainted souls  
the very best among us  
oblivious of their generational stature,  
luminescent  
indistinguishable  
transcendent—  
sentinels fortifying our world—  
solid and stalwart diamonds anchoring God’s garden

36 untainted souls  
the very best among us  
who inspire by their benevolence and humility,  
who comfort us from pain and loss,  
receptacles enduring our grief  
servants who insulate and shelter  
teachers who instill, inspire...

36 untainted souls  
the very best among us  
who manifest the heartbeat of the world  
many times over,  
with each generation,  
and so into 36  
are beckoned once again

# Patty's *tsror*

© 2018

then the breath fades,  
flowers wither,  
yet stones  
souls will endure,  
pebbles placed ontop gravestones  
each a permanent bond  
each a weight  
grounding our spirit  
yoking ghosts to the earth  
sheltered by each other's eternity,  
ever secured upon the Shepherd's sling...  
our fragility of life  
now forever protected from the curse of departure,  
now forever protected from the curse of perished memory

still, we must acknowledge those souls who must forever drift  
who instead choose the endless air, the wending wind  
to bond,  
to shelter those delicate souls,  
to celebrate their hope for unbounded freedom  
to forever roam,  
to forever seek their just serenity

thus, whether earth or sky  
should embrace the fragility of life everlasting...  
may Patty now forever be protected from the curse of endless departure,  
may Patty now forever be protected from the curse of perished memory!

# A poem by Richard Fenton Sederstrom

## Fenton's Lucretius

© 2018

1

(2018)

After so long and in such longing

Francis Fenton stands at the brim and brew  
of Devil's Kettle Falls and  
in this spray and foam of dream

pours from a cloudy glass vial an ounce or two  
of water from the river named for some tale of Francis'  
craft and shady artifice, Fenton River——

2

Clinamen I: If It Seems Random, It . . .

*Having dedicated whole  
to the destruction  
you inspire, the  
logic will be to go on doing it  
doing it. Having proceeded by <sup>1</sup>*

could've been the lines I had read  
just before I turned to the back of the book  
and wrote

### HERE'S

on the left bottom of the recto flyleaf  
just before my line of notion was interrupted  
by lines of pixels (Ah, Destruction!  
Industrious microphysics insulted by the evening news!).

They are maybe not the same lines,  
maybe not the same poem.  
But they'll do for inspiration.  
They're all I've got for direction.



Richard Fenton Sederstrom was raised and lives in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and the North Woods of Minnesota. Sederstrom is the author of five books of poetry, including "Eumaeus Tends" in 2014. A new book, "Selenity Book Four," was published last winter.

Continued on page 70

For we can't always know  
what lines will cohere.  
We know that lines cohere somehow, perhaps  
like the lines that form Venus' Flower Basket  
for Lucretius' pleasure.

3  
Prolepsis I: Species of Imagination

Lines of spicules form interstices  
of a three-dimensional stage  
where performers of diverse skills  
and diverse parts participate

in a theater that pretends like all theater,  
like all play to conform into a structure  
of a stage-set World, beyond pretense,  
only the captivity of performance,

an illusion of productivity.  
It is not to think like the sponge,  
which makes no thought,  
but to imagine into the soul of the sponge,

and imagine inwardly—not lowly—  
from the spiculate form that supports the creature  
in a diversity of nearly independent microbes  
to the solidity of atoms that support the ether,

all of which demands a construction of no thought,  
but construction nevertheless,  
complete only as a draft  
constantly edited.

Otherwise we'd be not on  
any Earth that would be—  
not to cohere.  
We don't know *what* lines.

Continued on page 71

4

What did Pound finally declare about the Cantos?

“i.e. it coheres all right  
even if my notes do not cohere.”

But surely not the Cantos.  
Maybe what cohere  
are the invisible lines  
that wave into sound—  
word, cognitive language  
to cohere in ways that are almost

incoherent to our questing minds  
as the moment just preceding  
that microbial internal wriggle  
that eventually declared itself LIFE.

Because what follows may be about  
the ways in which circumstances

time  
chemistry  
physics  
unidentifiable particles of stardust  
*etc*—  
multiples of et cetera to the final particle before infinite

converge to allow evolution  
to wiggle itself  
onto the primordial stage  
to allow for my petty ability  
to enjoy reading about “Logic,”  
in the words, perhaps not at random,  
of a similarly evolved  
collaboration of those circumstances.

Continued on page 72

5

*Francis Fenton:*

I shall say here there is no such condition as immortality.

I say this, and I have no evidence.  
I have looked. And looked.  
And felt, listened, tasted, sniffed out  
for the mortal incense of the creative bang.

We squabble  
over immortality who  
fear the hopeward condition  
of mortality

the conditions placed  
on the living among  
the competition waged  
by the helpless participants  
in those conditions.

I say it.  
There is no such condition as immortality.  
It is not true that nature abhors a vacuum.  
Nature abhors tautology.

But I who say it am I who say it.  
I am here, saying:  
If I die into nothingness  
I die into something of my own poor making.

6

Clinamen II: . . . Isn't

We avoid traps, the jagged rocks  
in order to avoid being snapped and bitten and torn.

We accept being snapped and bitten in traps  
in order to accept reality  
which is (partly oh partly)  
to accept the experience of being snapped and bitten.

Continued on page 73

Or do we avoid the traps  
in order to avoid experience at all?  
Which is to accept a single trepid experience  
as though there were no other.

Which is to accept no Other:

Like the graceful Other of the prow of a boat:  
canoe, sailboat, rowboat, dragon ship.

What other form so descends  
from a history (unwritten—  
controlled only in experience  
and memory—experience experienced)  
that ascends from form to the same form—  
the evolution of function and form.

Never static. Never quite changing.  
Like the soul. The molecular constancy of water  
made to glow in rippled wakes  
behind a grace of controlled interference.

7

*Eumaeus:*

I sense the mortality of things.  
The soft mullein on the lakeshore. The lakeshore.

The fossilized segment of an ancient  
horsetail—an inch and a half in diameter  
from a plant that would tower above

the delicate remnant plants  
that grow on the lakeshore and by the road  
to the mailbox between Carol and me  
and the ferns whose ancestors grew

along, among, the ancestors  
of the horsetails along some lakeshore  
and beside carboniferous ferns burned  
to put the Iron Age on wheels

Continued on page 74

so that the sun would not set on the boot-tracks—  
the railroads, the implanted colonial capitols,  
the mine-fields and mausolea—the willful amnesia  
of the Western World.

8  
Prolepsis II: From Null to Nill, but Something

But even having introduced it maybe  
I cannot sense the appropriate oblivion.  
The simple nullity.

To address nullity is to address  
that which is annulled.  
And I am non-annulled, dis-obliviated,  
always in the way.

“nothing  
I have done

is made up of  
nothing

and the diphthong

ae”<sup>2</sup>

Aye?

9  
*Francis Fenton:*

Of Atoms  
. . . and every word . . .

No. No. No.  
not what forms the page  
and the ink on the page—  
well, those too.  
But read the page.  
Feel the soft breath that exhales  
from your effort.

Continued on page 75

Continued from page 74

Consider the light  
that rises from the snow of the page.  
The light  
that issues from the sun or the candle,  
even the moon in its gray-lit fullness.

Consider even the nature of ideas  
that bounce and shimmer between you  
and the word on the page and the words  
on the page and your eyes, and you:  
the brain of you and the brain itself . . .

10

*Eumaeus:*

Prolepsis III: "*Schoenberg's last word was Harmonious!*"<sup>3</sup>

Is the last-word watchword the signal to watch from  
as much (more?) as *for*?

I shall, who have advanced the necessity of Story,  
save that word for my own final breath—  
Then you at the bed will think that  
I want my life to be told for posterity.

You will not know that I mean—  
what I might (might not) want told  
is what proceeds from Story—  
and that might be silence.

But even silence remains, a word.  
Let death stop at a start, microphysics beyond. . .

Our lives tell no story.  
Our narratives  
are parts and particles of speech  
composed into petty exposition.

Continued on page 76

Continued from page 75

*non — je ne  
laisserai pas  
le néant*<sup>4</sup>

. . . and consider also  
the mere time it took you  
to read the words on that page.

Time itself is the repository of every atom.

And what else may be coeval?  
Time without atoms is bereft of all things:  
the atoms and all that atoms compose.

The oblivion that is you is  
still minutely finite  
until time,  
composed around atoms, runs out.

Time gone, so runs away  
the final possibility of your peculiar  
terror of death.

Or no.  
Our lives offer up the atoms  
of story.

Lucretius . . .

11  
(c. 1724)

—The water slips, drips into the fast sheen of the falls.  
The falls remix Fenton River, drop by molecule  
into the Brule River, and then

a vapor of nearly discrete particles  
spread and flow under Lake Superior and into Wisconsin  
and follow U.S. Route 2 to near Brule Lake and then, then

Continued on page 77

becomes a ghost of the vapor of the river itself and Francis  
spread wide  
to contract again into the original flow

but out of all control save Fenton's wyrd gesture  
spread out and in and out and in, undulating  
until nowhere is not this river, is not less than anywhere.

12

Clinamen III: If It Seems Systematic, It . . .

The meadowlark, dead on a country blacktop,  
is two ways removed from the wreck of Earth.

The bird and our hearing are silenced.  
The charm of its small beauty erodes into the ditch.

Out of our natural distances we have much  
to offer by way of our misunderstanding:

Misunderstanding the meadowlark  
we are always in awe of its beauty

and the joy we misunderstand  
to be the bird's joy, not ours—and broken.

Misunderstanding death we remain  
in awe of the power we believe

belongs to some force called Death.  
How dully fearsome to see death as it is:

the simple molecular change into no-change.  
Better for me that I slip into the lake

and feel again over my whole body  
the constant change in changeless water.

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Alice Notley, "Logic," in *Songs and Stories of the Ghouls*.

<sup>2</sup>William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All*, vi.

<sup>3</sup>Gören Sonevi, *Mozart's Third Brain*, xxxiv

<sup>4</sup>Stephane Mallarmé, "Un Tombeau pour Anatole," 17.

# Chuck LaVoie

Fountain Hills Artist



**"Small Skull"**  
License plates  
12" x 12"  
April 2017

Chuck LaVoie is a long-time Arizona resident, artist, and homebuilder living with his wife and son in Fountain Hills. His work has recently been shown at the Goodyear Branch Library "Alphabet Soup" exhibition in Goodyear, Arizona and at The Tohono Chul Gallery and Botanical Garden "Dia de los Muertos" exhibition in Tucson, Arizona. Contact him at [crlavoie@cox.net](mailto:crlavoie@cox.net).



# Chuck LaVoie

Fountain Hills Artist



“Skull”  
License plates  
36” x 54”  
May 2017

“The impetus behind my latest artistic work is an attempt to elevate the ordinary. I utilize objects that would otherwise be discarded—like used license plates, scrap lumber, and old bicycle chain—hoping to transform mundane items into a piece that’s more than the sum of its parts.”

- Chuck LaVoie

# Chuck LaVoie

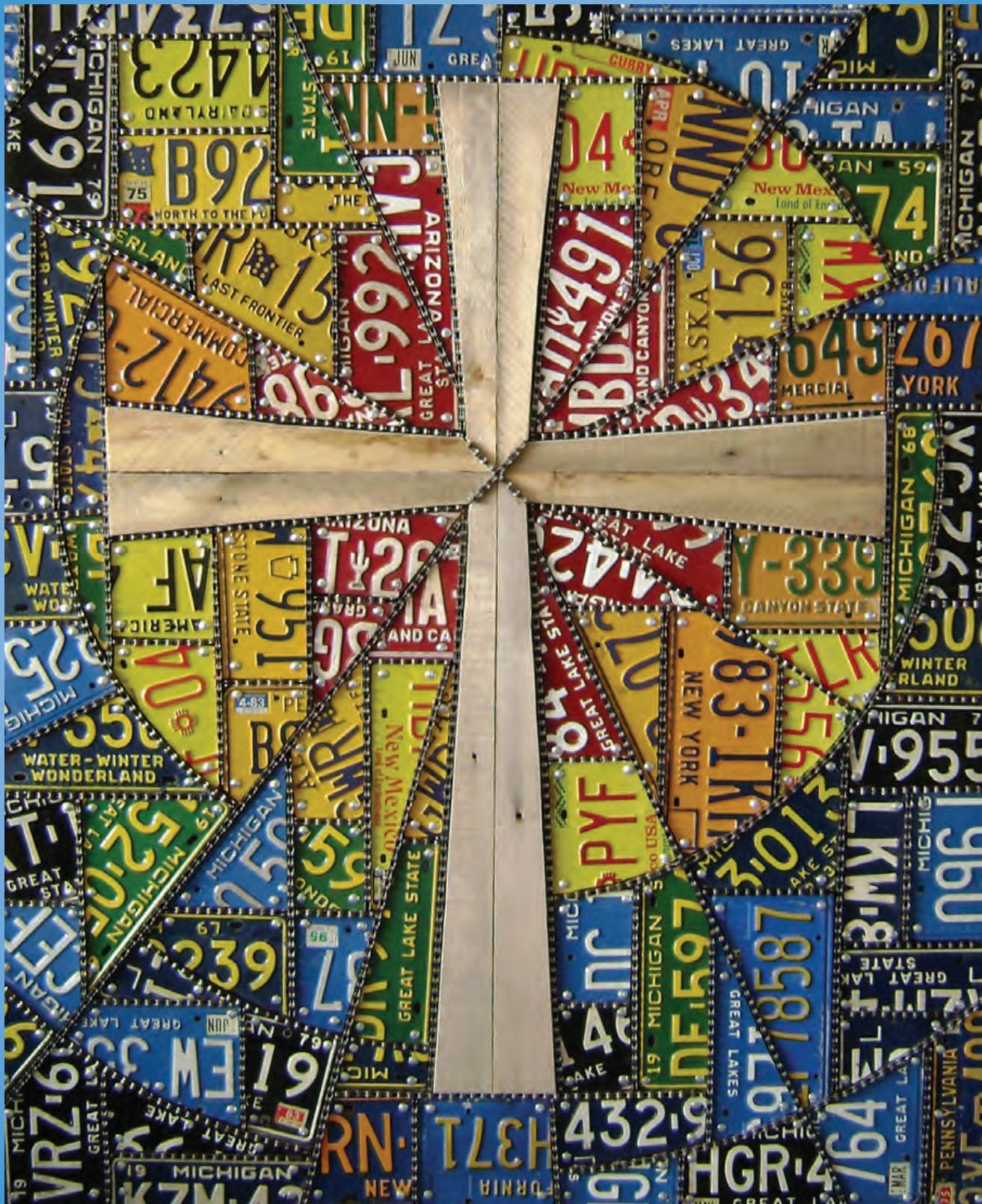
Fountain Hills Artist



**“Crossroads”**  
License plates and  
bicycle chain  
18” x 24”  
December 2017

# Chuck LaVoie

Fountain Hills Artist



“Take Me to Church”

Mixed Media (license plates, bicycle chain and pallet wood)

48” x 60”

February 2018

# FRIDAY NIGHT *Writes*

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**The Annual  
Fall Festival  
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**Join us for an amazing showcase of the arts, with music,  
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and literary readings!**

**Free admission!**

**For more details, go to The Arizona Consortium  
for the Arts website, [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).**

# Open Mic: A celebration of the arts

Join us at our Monthly Open Mic Arts, Letters and Culture Events! This is a great chance for artists, writers and performers in all genres, spanning all disciplines and cultural representations, to get together, read, present, share, learn and enjoy. A featured artist is showcased for the entire month!

**WHERE:** Dog-Eared Pages Books, 16428 N. 32nd St., Suite 111 (just south of Bell Road), Phoenix, AZ 85032; (602) 283-5423.

**WHEN:** The last Thursday of each month, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

We also address key issues in contemporary art and culture, exchange ideas, learn new things through rigorous talks, conversations, debates and readings in an informal setting. Join us! Everyone is invited to bring a friend(s) and enjoy exciting conversations in the beautiful surroundings of the neighborhood bookstore. Meet new and old friends and enjoy! All programs are free and open to the public. For more information, contact Elena Thornton — (602) 263-5373 or [info@artizona.org](mailto:info@artizona.org).

## About The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a non-profit organization approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission in February 2008. We hold a 501c3 tax-exempt status.

We are all-volunteer. We are educators, artists, performers, writers and supporters of all artistic endeavors, and are proponents and supporters of the rich, vibrant and diverse community of the Greater Phoenix area as well as the entire state.

The Arizona Consortium seeks to create a multicultural, multidisciplinary arts center that will provide a home for our activities and foster artistic growth for people of all ages in conjunction with exhibiting artists, writers, actors, dancers

and musicians who will share their expertise in a gallery, theater setting.

Please visit [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org) or [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) for more information about becoming a member, networking, donating, advertising, volunteering or submitting work to The Blue Guitar arts and literary magazine, Unstrung poetry magazine and The Blue Guitar Jr. literary and arts magazine for youth.

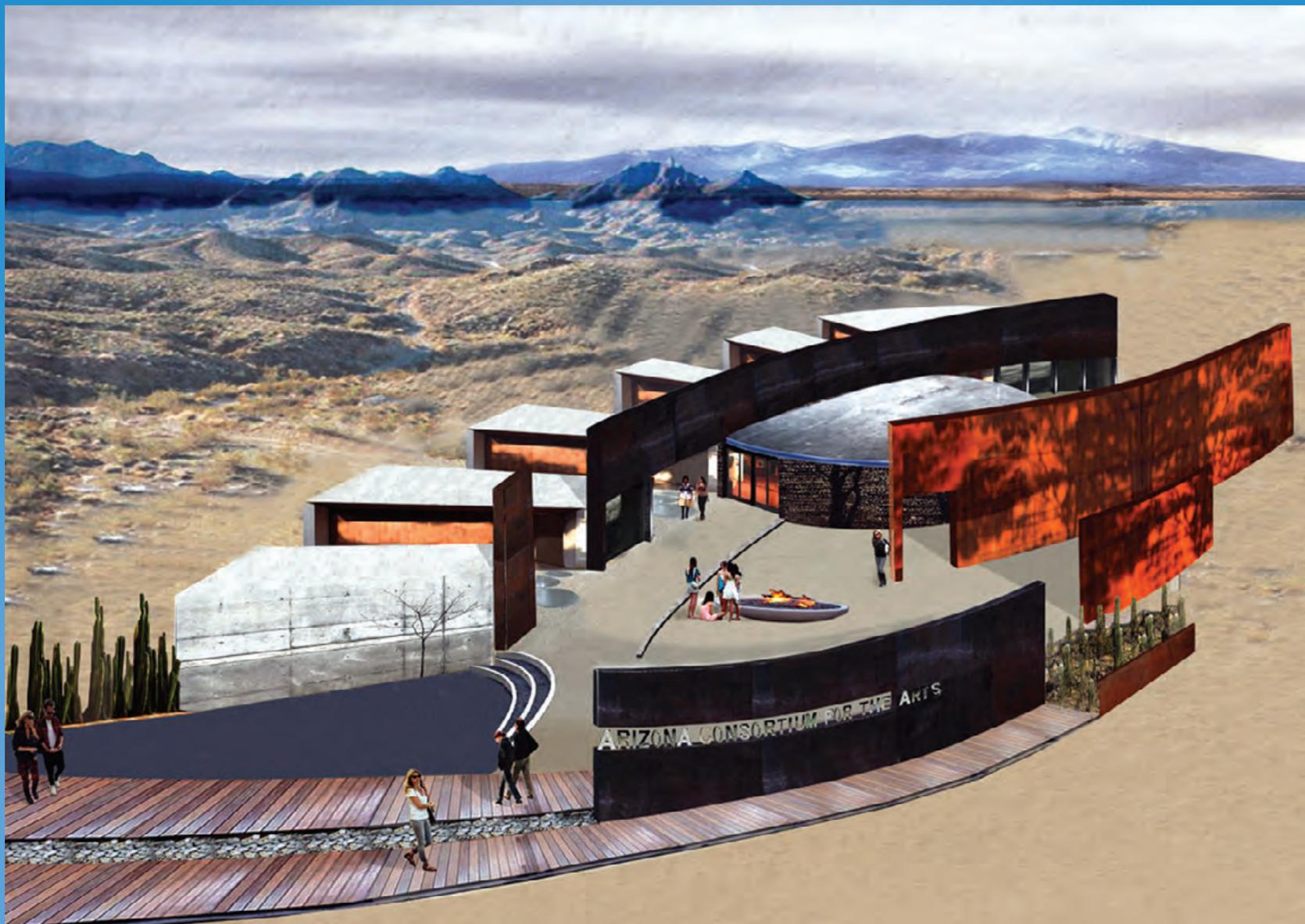
You can become a part of the Arizona Consortium and make a difference. There are countless ways to contribute, and the consortium is grateful for any donation in any form. For us to grow as an organization, provide various services to



artists, and support inspiring projects, your financial support is needed. Every dollar received will support our website, the publication of our magazines, and the establishment of our future center.

Please visit our donations page, <http://www.artizona.org/donate.html>, and donate today!

Thank you for your support!



A rendering of the consortium's dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, building designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

# The consortium's vision for a multicultural arts center

The rendering of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, Building Designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

The Center will be a source and a destination for creativity and inspiration. It will be a home for many wonderful community organizations, creative and innovative multicultural and multidisciplinary activities, classes and projects representing and celebrating our diverse community.

The Center will be a cultural icon in the Phoenix area.

The Center will be an inimitable foundation for a unique experience, one that you'll want to share with family, friends and community.

Designed by Effie Bouras, the Center will feature numerous spaces for the arts in all genres, performances and presentations. A flexible and variable seating performance theater for rehearsals, concerts, theatrical presentations, video art and films, lectures, meetings and recordings will be available free-of-charge or at a minimum cost.

# Meet the staff of The Blue Guitar magazine



**Elena Thornton, publisher:** Founder and president of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, Elena is an educator, artist and poet and lives in Phoenix. Reach her at [info@artizona.org](mailto:info@artizona.org).

**Rebecca Dyer, co-editor:** A Tucson native, Rebecca is a poet, journalist and teacher residing in Mesa with her husband, Rick, her Blue Guitar co-editor. Reach her at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).

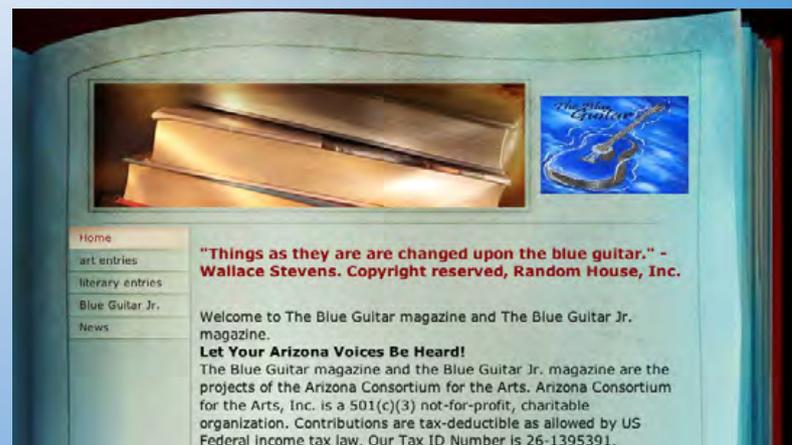


**Richard H. Dyer Jr., co-editor:** Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the news editor of two monthly newspapers with websites in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor. Reach him at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org).

**Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for The Blue Guitar:** Marjory, of Scottsdale, is an award-winning artist, muralist and an acrylic-painting instructor. Her biography and contact information are available at [mboyerart.com](http://mboyerart.com).



## Check our websites for news on the arts



Check out The Arizona Consortium for the Arts website, [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org). There, you can sign up for an e-mailed newsletter.

The Blue Guitar Magazine's website is [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org). Like us on Facebook. Follow @BlueGuitarMagAZ on Twitter.

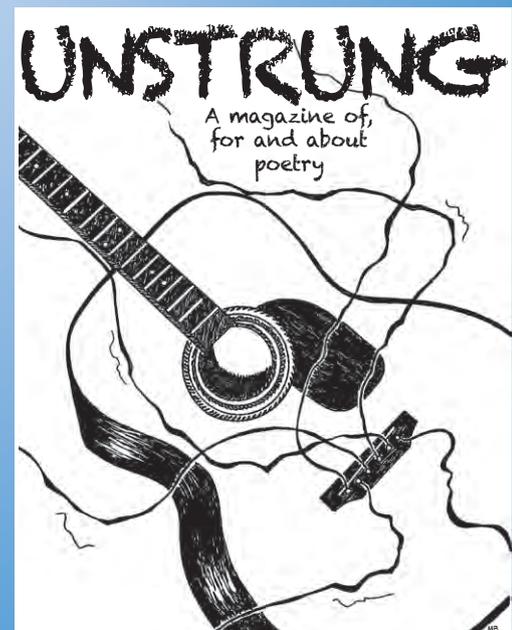
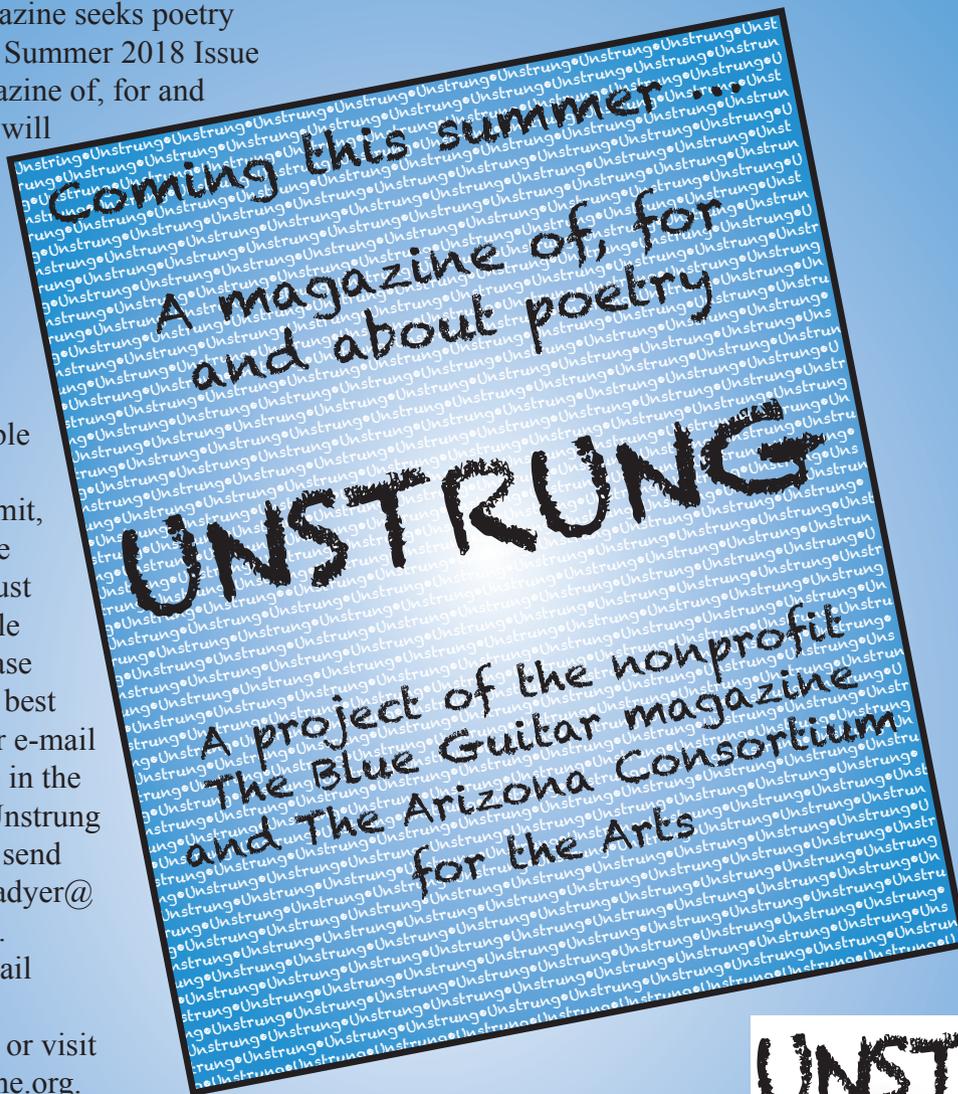
# A Call to Poets for the 2018 Issue of Unstrung

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks poetry submissions for the Summer 2018 Issue of Unstrung, a magazine of, for and

about poetry. Submissions will be accepted from June 1 through July 4. Poets must submit original work and must have a tie to Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the poet must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and multiple poems may be submitted. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your e-mail submission. Please include in the e-mail subject line: Attn. Unstrung — Poetry submission, and send to Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, e-mail Rebecca at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org) or visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, is a nonprofit project of The Blue Guitar magazine and the nonprofit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about Unstrung magazine, The Blue Guitar magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites:

[www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org)  
and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).



# A Call to Writers for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who write  
and to adults who write  
for children and teens

**T**he Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks literary submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who write for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2018, in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction — all geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Writers must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For additional information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine is a project of the nonprofit The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. magazines and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites:  
[www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org) and [www.artizona.org](http://www.artizona.org).

# A Call to Artists for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who create art  
and to adults who create art  
for children and teens

**T**he Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks art submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who create art for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2018, in all media geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Artists must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the artist must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple mediums; up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name, contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Please include your name and the best way to contact you. To submit or for more information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For additional information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

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# A Call to Writers for Fall 2018



The Blue Guitar magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2018 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live part- or full-time in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at [rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).

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## A Call to Artists for Fall 2018

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks art submissions in all mediums for the Fall 2018 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4. Any artists who work in any visual art media, are 18 years or older and are part- or full-time Arizona residents can submit. It is free to submit and up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at [richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org](mailto:richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org). For more information, visit [www.theblueguitarmagazine.org](http://www.theblueguitarmagazine.org).



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“Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar.”  
— Excerpt from Wallace Stevens’ 1937 poem “The Man With the Blue Guitar.”  
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Volume 10,  
Number 1  
Spring Issue  
**FREE!**

*“Things  
as they are  
are  
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