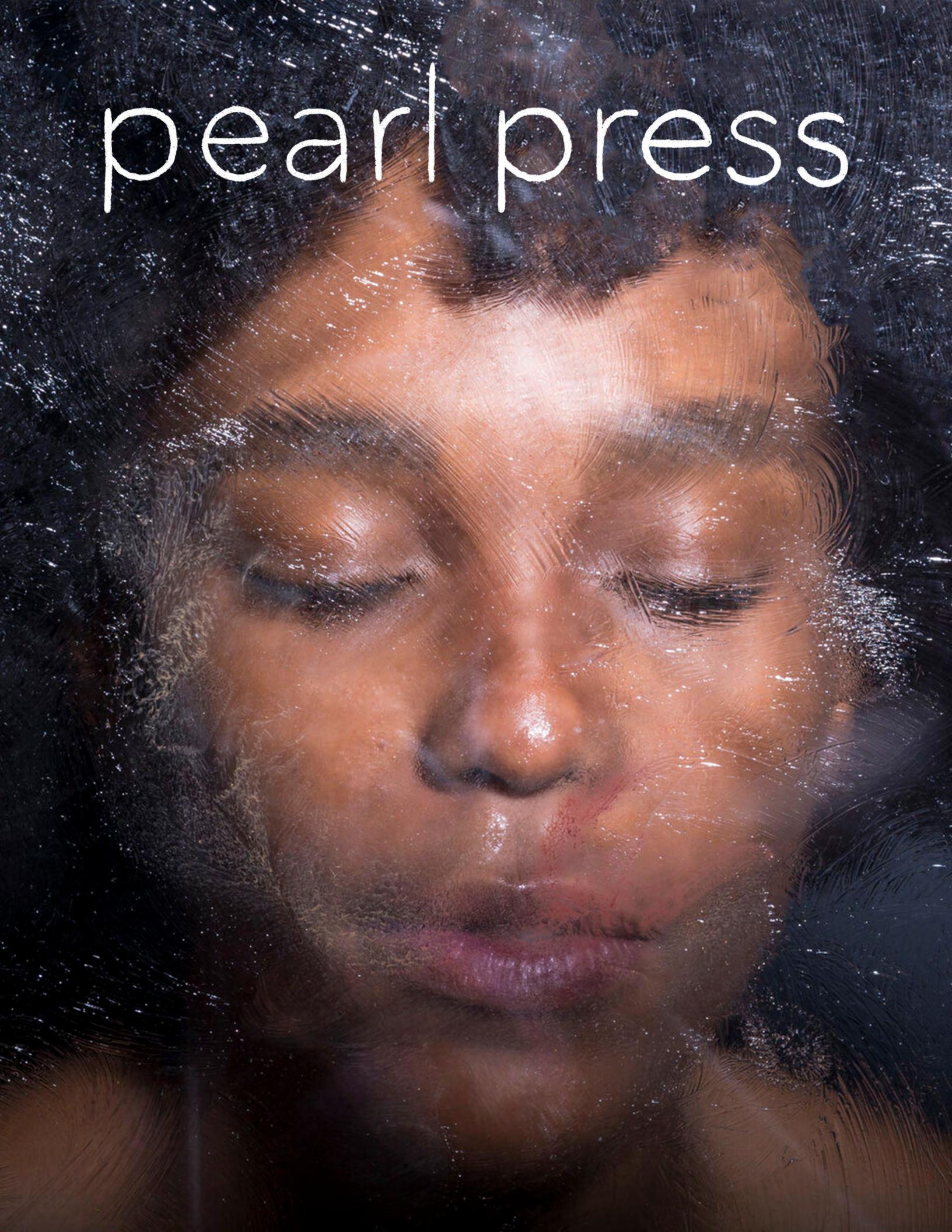


pearl press



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This issue of Pearl Press features work from:

Samantha Jensen, Venessa Tai Yeh, Hinako Ogoshi, Robin Jamketal, Edward Thomas-Herrera, Frances Bukovsky, Stephanie Schwiederek, Chloe Scout Nix, Abigail Marcolini, Christina Mei Rouse, Toni Dawe, Saoirse Sexton, Kevin Gutoskey, Miya Jordan, Jen Klockner, Kadiejra O'Neal

Cover image: Kadiejra O'Neal

Curated by: Delilah Twersky

pov: you are labeled as a first-generation taiwanese-american



i look
for meaning
in the mooncake
and i find only the taste of
a delicious paste of dates
wrapped inside a golden
brown flower. i look to the
upside down fú for a prayer
but only find it in the sound
of má jiàng pieces click-clacking
with the laughter of my family
as i slip away into sleep on the
couch. i was given the hóng bāo
for prosperity, so i gave it away.
i find comfort in the smell of
chòu dòu fu and alleys weathered
by humidity that clings to my
skin. the incense offered to
the laughing buddha speaks
a language i thought i didn't
understand. until i realized
my language was the stillness
of the buddha stone. it was
the flickering smoke and
the ash tick-tocking
time without a
sound.

Venessa Tai Yeh



nothing and everything: Hinako Ogoshi

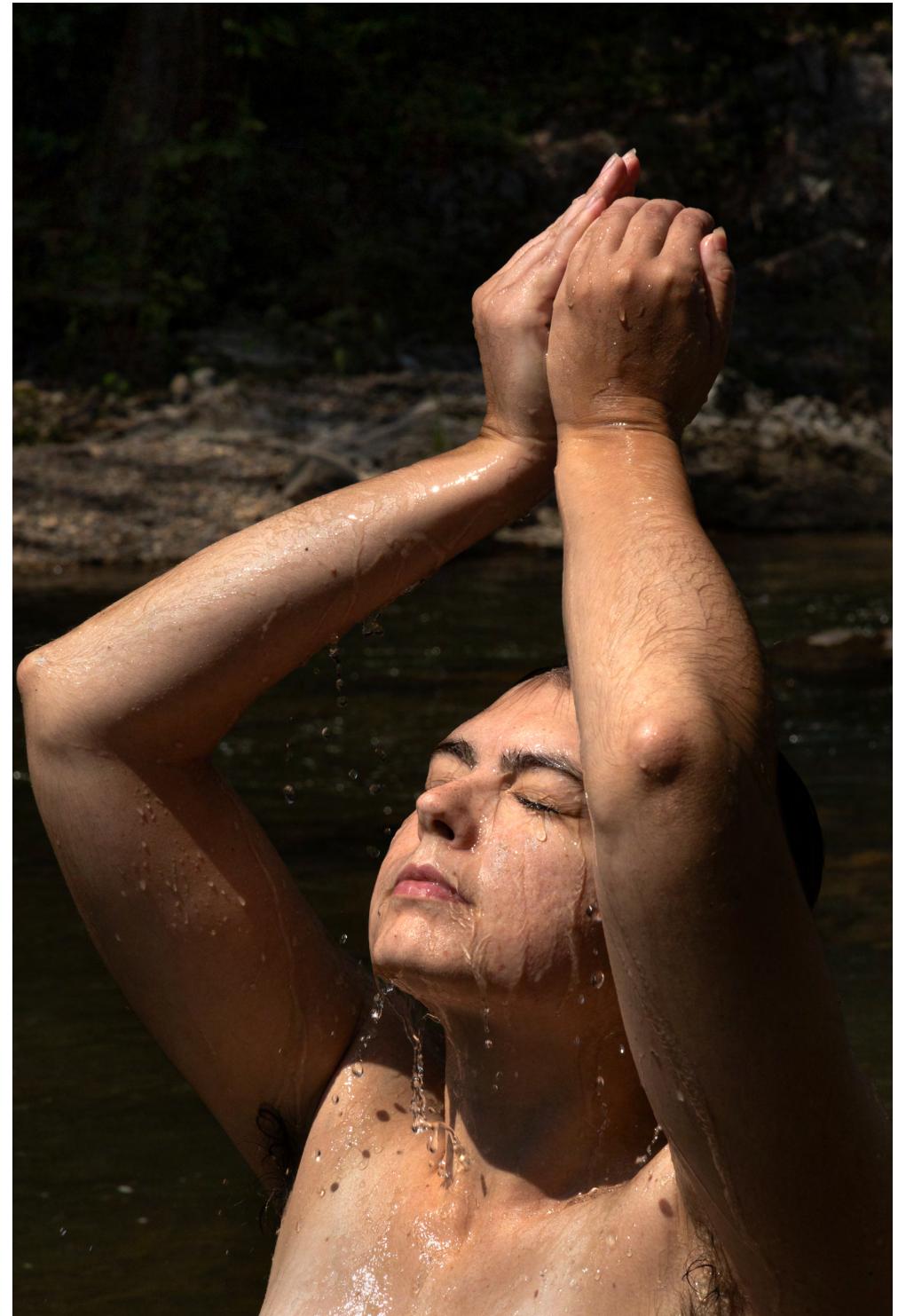


Identity Loss #3: Robin Jamkatel

the incomplete cartographer

I can't draw you a detailed map because I'm not the god of anything. I can barely lay claim to cardinal directions and a vague sense of forward movement. I'm powerless to deposit these leafless trees anywhere, these February houses still clinging onto their Christmas lights, these cafés, these yoga studios, these pastel boutiques for expectant mothers. Here is where you've got to turn onto a noisy intersection, they tell me. Here you might pick up a bus, should you deserve one. This is the spot from which you can see the church steeple, but only at a remove. The ancients surrounded Old World continents with an imagined circular ocean because they realized, after a certain point, they had to come clean and stop pretending they knew where everything was headed. I invite you to draw me a detailed map. You possess perspective I don't, that I can't, and never will. Feel free to mark my exact location with a big bold X in red like a pirate's buried treasure, or a dotted line like a scenic route through southern Utah, or just abandon me, if you must, to an expanse of gray GPS pixels. Surround me with an imagined circular ocean. I'm not the god of anything. I struggle to inhabit this place with joy. I've come clean and stopped pretending I know where everything is headed.

Edward Thomas-Herrera



Baptism: Frances Bukovsky



I'll See You in the Morning: Stephanie Schwiederek



RADIUS: Samantha Jensen



Knocked up #2: Chloe Scout Nix



Revealed by Shadow: Frances Bukovsky

a glory be (for you and me)

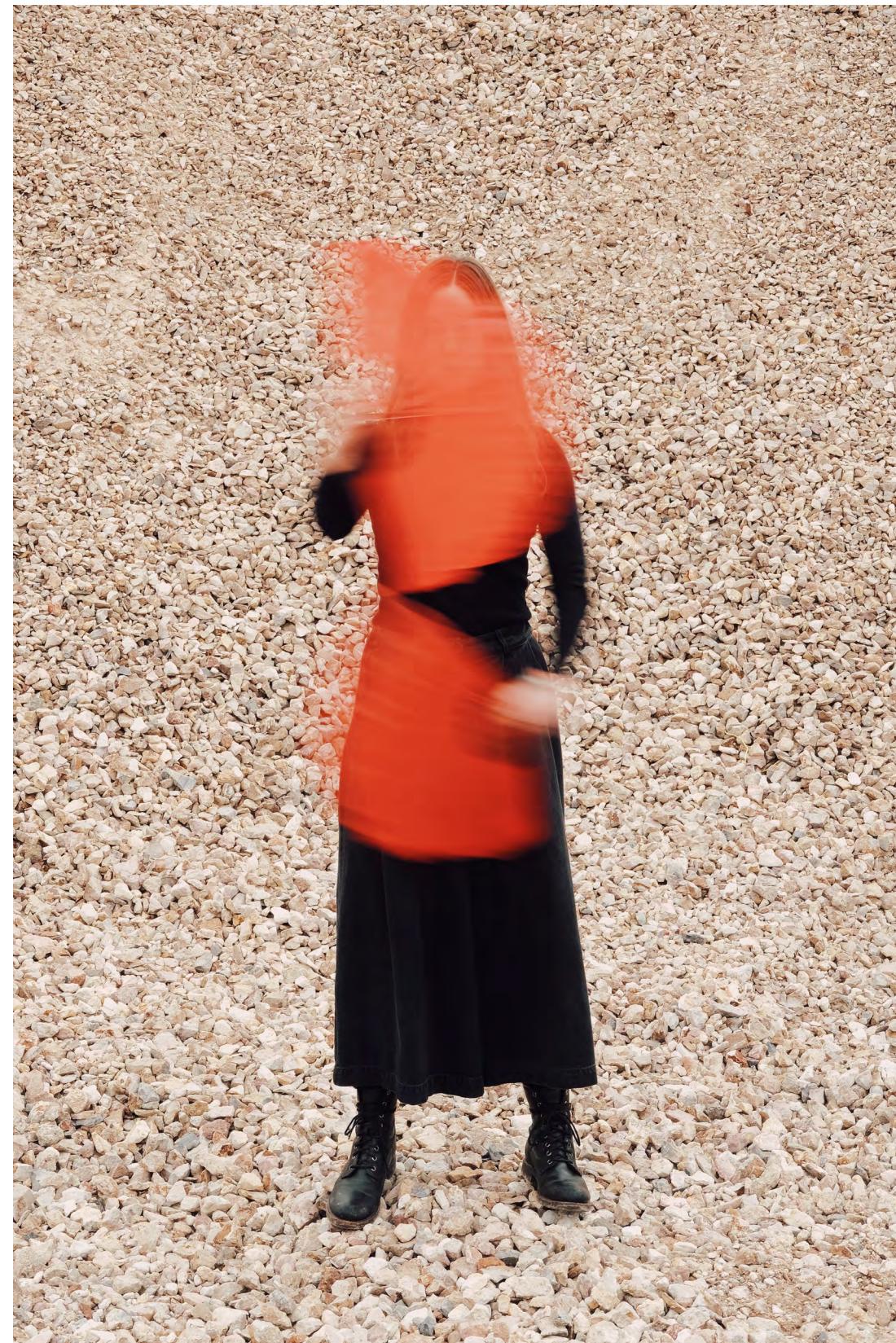
How many times do you have to repeat strong are the meek before it's true?

How seventeen do you have to be to give out plastic daisies at the adobe McDonald's by your high school? How amazing is it that my desires are simple? (One: a little levity; two: an exception, like a star for Ed Ruscha on Hollywood Boulevard.) How many scarlet honeyeater feathers would I have been worth in the Solomon Islands all those years ago? (The only ethical way to find out is if you get that Malinowski book for free.)

I felt free when I realized my preference for The Clash over The Cure alienated me from my peers. Free at first, but I soon became boorish, because I had three questions I wanted to pose to the group (I'm so big, who could contain me? I'm so small, who could find me? I'm so medium, who gives a fuck?).

So I blamed the music when I questioned why I got frustrated like a child over these syllogisms. It was on the music that I said to the hairdresser: do you have a vision for me? Do you see this strange face? And, if so, can you take it into consideration?

I have since left the question of the meek and our supposed strength on the table next to the keys to the apartment because I learned that questions are nothing more than noise, because the quiet -- that meek angel of clarity -- is the only thing that wrings out of me those little bouts of glory.



Semblance: Christina Mei Rouse

So glory to this museum body, which stands next to illuminated manuscripts and tans on the deck of the Intrepid. May it become like that old Victorian manor in downtown Phoenix, which seemed so out of place yet so celebrated and stewarded. It was this very angel that pushed me up the staircase at the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco, the one who whispered to me in New York City: here, you can be on a highway and be in the city too.

Glory to my girls, who say everything true. And glory to the equator: for at any given moment, there is a sun over Guyana, a furnace, and a million plantains to enjoy. Glory to this past September, when I knew it would not be long before the first maple leaf bombed the sidewalk
declaring that the world still turns about its axis.

Like when summer peeks around the freezing corner and we say:
ah, yes, there are all the people.

Abigail Marcolini



they were wearing my face: Chloe Scout Nix

dissociate associate

I don't know who you are
A reflection baited with grace or fury
Eyes deterring

I blink
Plastic shutters quake in the wind
How I wish I could be blind

I lay on the bed in the motel fog, break of hazy dawn, cigarette
ash lining tear ducts and stained
countertops, ripe with jaundice and lilac lash, whip placed in the
remains of my hands

Perhaps I am bitter
At the loss of the familiar
I blink

Eyes traversing
Perhaps I miss the person in the mirror
I don't know who you are

Toni Dawe



Suspended in Cabinteely: Saoirse Sexton

self-portrait as a dust jacket

Edward Thomas-Herrera is a Salvadoran-American poet, playwright, and performer who lives in a manner of speaking. Mostly Chicago. Sometimes in an imaginary villa on an island in the Mediterranean. He's only been published a handful of time in his entire life - and one of those times was for an online literary magazine, so he's not sure if that really counts as "published." On the subject of Edward's writing, his therapist has said, "Your depressing poems are always a little funny and your funny poems are always a little depressing." Edward attended Rice University where he majored in musicology which explains why he found *The Sting* so disappointing. Any soundtrack that heavily features ragtime music is completely anachronistic for a movie clearly set in 1936. He is a bottomless pit for coffee and compliments and he's more Latino than you'd think. At least he can speak the goddamned language. In 1983, he was on the receiving end of a mischievous wink and a smile from famed British composer Sir Michael Tippett. Edward was 19 at the time; Sir Michael was 78. Things never went any further than that despite the fact they were both notoriously easy lays, which is par for the course in a life of near misses and squandered chances. Edward is the creative genius behind *When Bad Animals Happen to Good People*, a blog dedicated to reposting news items about people being attacked by wild animals. It lasted about six weeks before he lost interest. He routinely forgets lots of stuff: mostly usernames and passwords, but also birthdays, anniversaries, dentist appointments, and the meaning of notes followed by multiple exclamation points jotted down during a staff meeting from only earlier in the day. It'd be comic if it weren't all so tragic. Here are some of his most recent Google searches: anaphora, Penguin Classics cover generator, mitch.fit.model, Miss Universe Pageant 1975, Fudgie the Whale, Quad Cities, prostate cancer, trahana, Domenico Cimarosa. These days, Edward might look like a librarian who doesn't know how to dress or moisturize, but he is a force of nature. Deep inside him flow turgid rivers of molten emotional lava determined to erupt someday into a Pulitzer Prize opportunity for any adventurous National Geographic photographer. Entire fishing villages will be buried under burning ash. He will disrupt flight paths and alter weather patterns. Expect refugees.

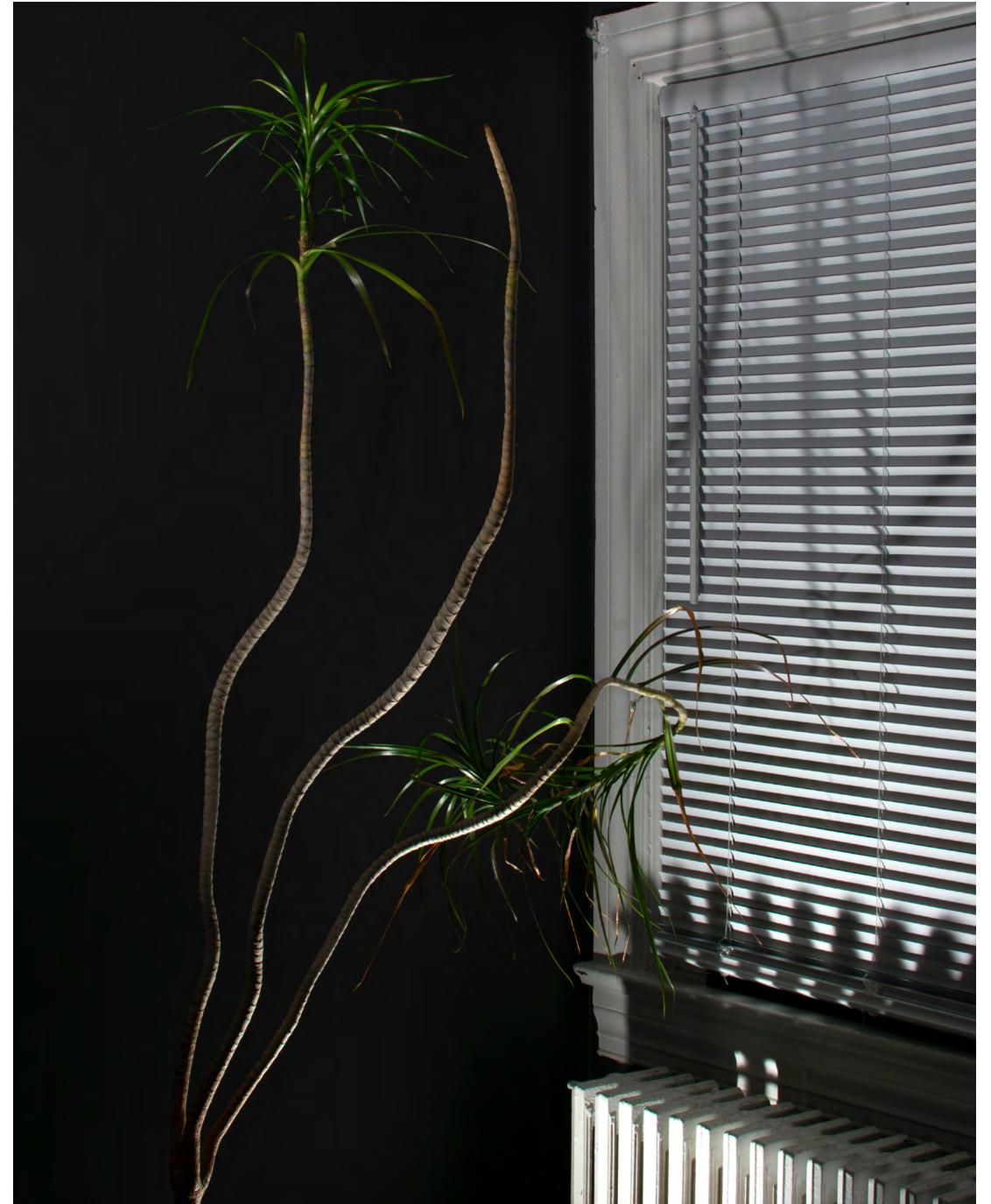
Edward Thomas-Herrera



Identity Loss #1: Robin Jamkate



I'll See You in the Morning: Stephanie Schwiederek



Kevin's Room, 2025: Kevin Gutoskey



Pink, 2021: Kevin Gutoskey

how to be a brown skinned girl

Rule #1: "Pretty for ... a Black girl"

You will hear this phrase -- more times than you would like. However, pay them no mind and know you are not pretty -- you are as radiant as the sun and as precious as a girl. That many will marvel at you, not just for your looks, but for your resiliency, the way you carry yourself, and that quiet strength that you possess.

Rule #2: "Stop being so angry!"

They will look at your face and see the lack of emotion. Some will let you be, and other times you , a white man who works for the city and shout at you, "Smile, girly! Life isn't all that bad". But if he were a brown skinned person in these times -- well, I don't have to tell you. While your face may tell a story of anger or exhaustion -- they will never really know that while your face says nothing, your heart has bloomed after getting a heartfelt message from a friend. Besides, life is better when they don't know everything.

Rule #3: "You need to dress your age. Stop being fast!"

You may grow up thinking your body is inappropriate. That you are too big in some areas that your peers, especially the girls, are not. You'll force yourself to wear baggy clothes and nonrevealing neck-lines to hide your chest, stomach, and thighs -- spoiler, it won't help. By the time you leave your school from a small conservative town for college, you will find yourself, your style, and your love for your body in due time. Remember: you never had a say in how your body was designed but you can decide how you view it.

Rule #4: "You need to stop crying! You are not white!"

You will be told time and time again that you need to be stronger than you are just because that is what has always been done. Being told to fix your face, never let them see you cry, or how "we" don't do all of that. That you need to dial back your feelings to placate others. You have the right to feel your feelings like everyone else, and you should never feel burdened for doing so. It will take time to find what works for you and to accept who you are and learn to process grief, hopelessness, and failure but you will.

Miya Jordan



RADIUS: Samantha Jensen

field-notes self-portrait

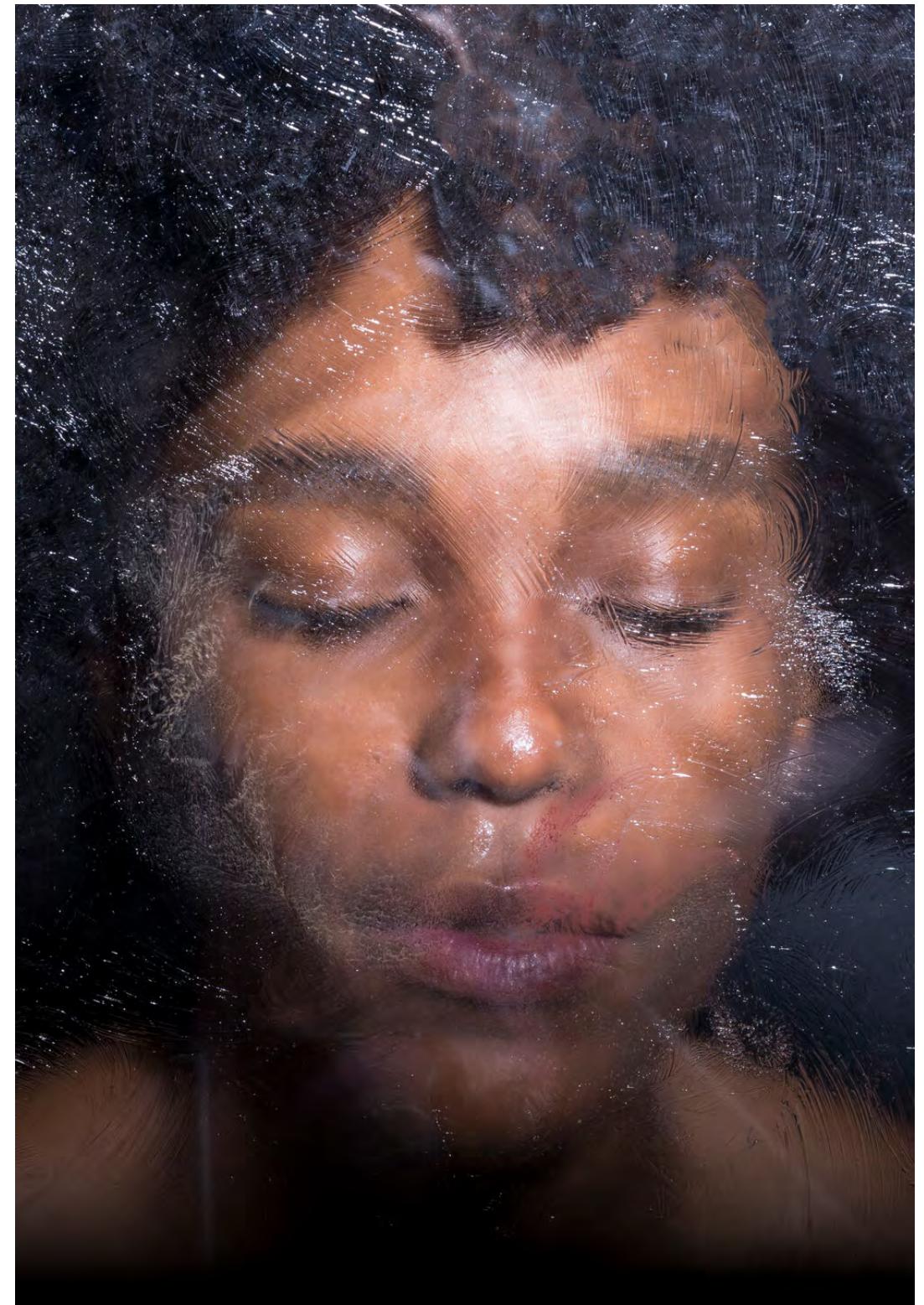
I am a hat
or I have one,
actually, I have many
in the mirror,
I am different than
what my mom probably sees
I think about gay romance,
am I James Dean?
please, let me be hunky
but I think I'm just a hat
I am a child of
New Jersey blacktop grass driveways,



RADIUS: Samantha Jensen

playing fortress and freezetag and kickball into
the back of that pick-up
God I wish I had a car
What if I was a car?
maybe a MG Midget convertible,
but I'd have to learn stick
I think about quitting my job, so I am not my job
because right now it feels like I'm being swallowed by my VPN
If I wasn't a sell-out, what would I be?
not an artist,
but something adjacent
like happy?

Jen Klockner



Sorry For The Inconvenience, 2015: Kadiegra O'Neal



shot by dad, 2025: Chloe Scout Nix

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Delilah Twersky
Pearl Press
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