



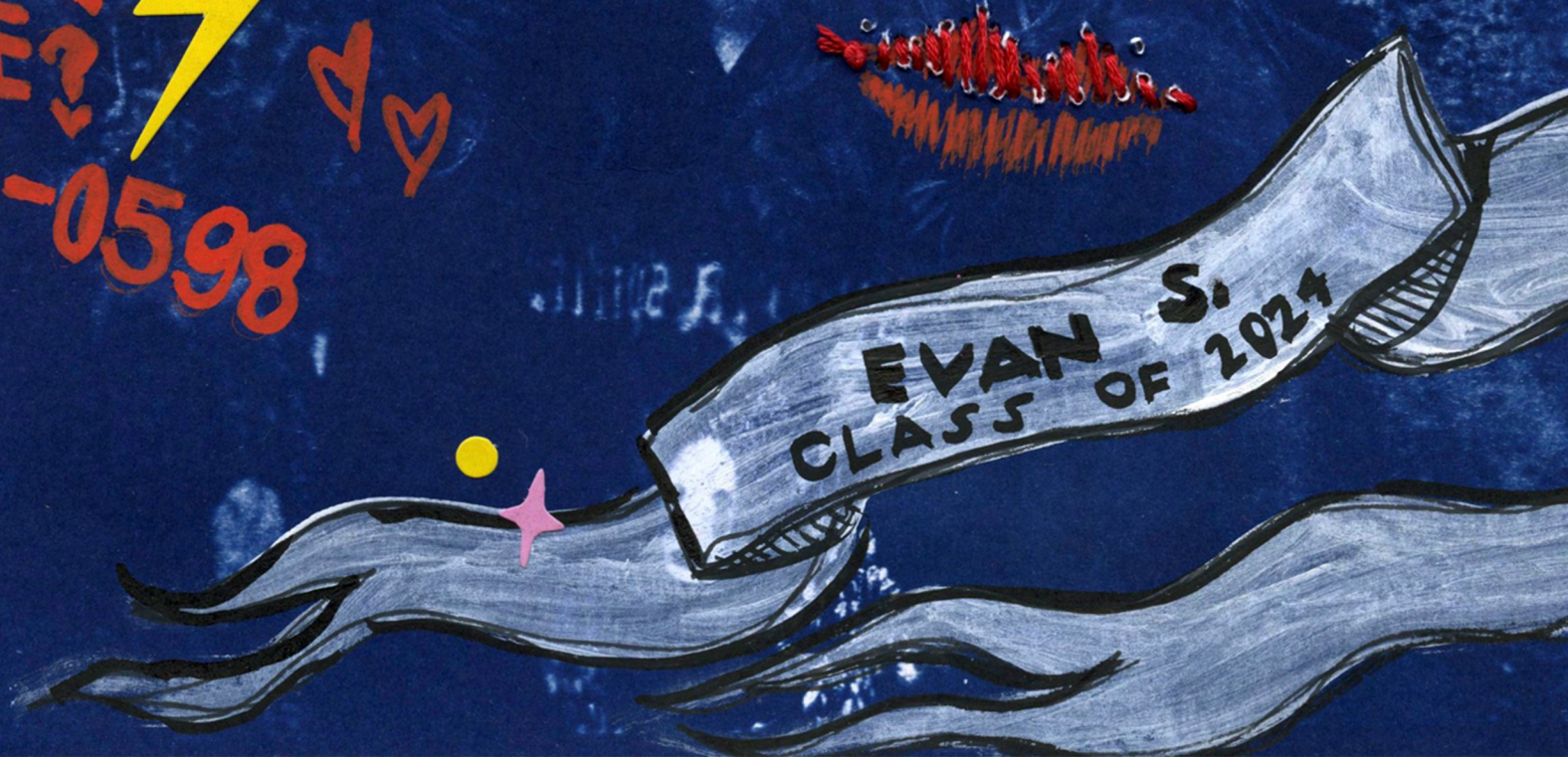
pearl press



ALL  
ME?  
8-0598



EVAN S.  
CLASS OF 2024





# ISSUE NO. 18: HIGH SCHOOL

October 2023

This issue of Pearl Press features work from:

Nicole Thackwray  
Mika Simoncelli  
Jared Tennant  
Evie Huang  
Jacob Nathan  
Carson Stachura  
Morgan Miller  
Ella Floyd  
Lumi Tuomi  
Katherine Breeden  
Ellie Musgrave  
Sean Turner  
Jen Klockner  
Yaa Mensah-King  
Ivi Hua  
Sina Aebischer  
Oliver Blank  
Caitlyn Hasenfratz

Cover image: Ella Floyd

Curated by: Delilah Twersky

# POKER GAME IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

where knowledge meets a sun // a bulb, fluorescent.  
tables spinning: as the sparrow does, a soft landing. feet  
on the floor, grasping for an end. all circles rerouted // rewroughted.  
the clock strikes eight. fifty-two scattered. fifty-two and nine  
in the absence of ghosts. us an ouroboros: serpents,  
incisors plummeting through palm.//the queen of hearts  
shreds. before the road ended she loved a hundred days. //  
tears in the mirror. the scythe sings greed.  
our bets land hollow. // everything whole is swallowed,  
pennies and gold on the tongue. in offering, i'll give us this-  
joy burnt and weighed / in feathers. // tonight, we seek  
no precious time: for emptiness unreturned,  
i fold at midnight.

Ivi Hua

# I GO TO THE LIBRARY SWEATING

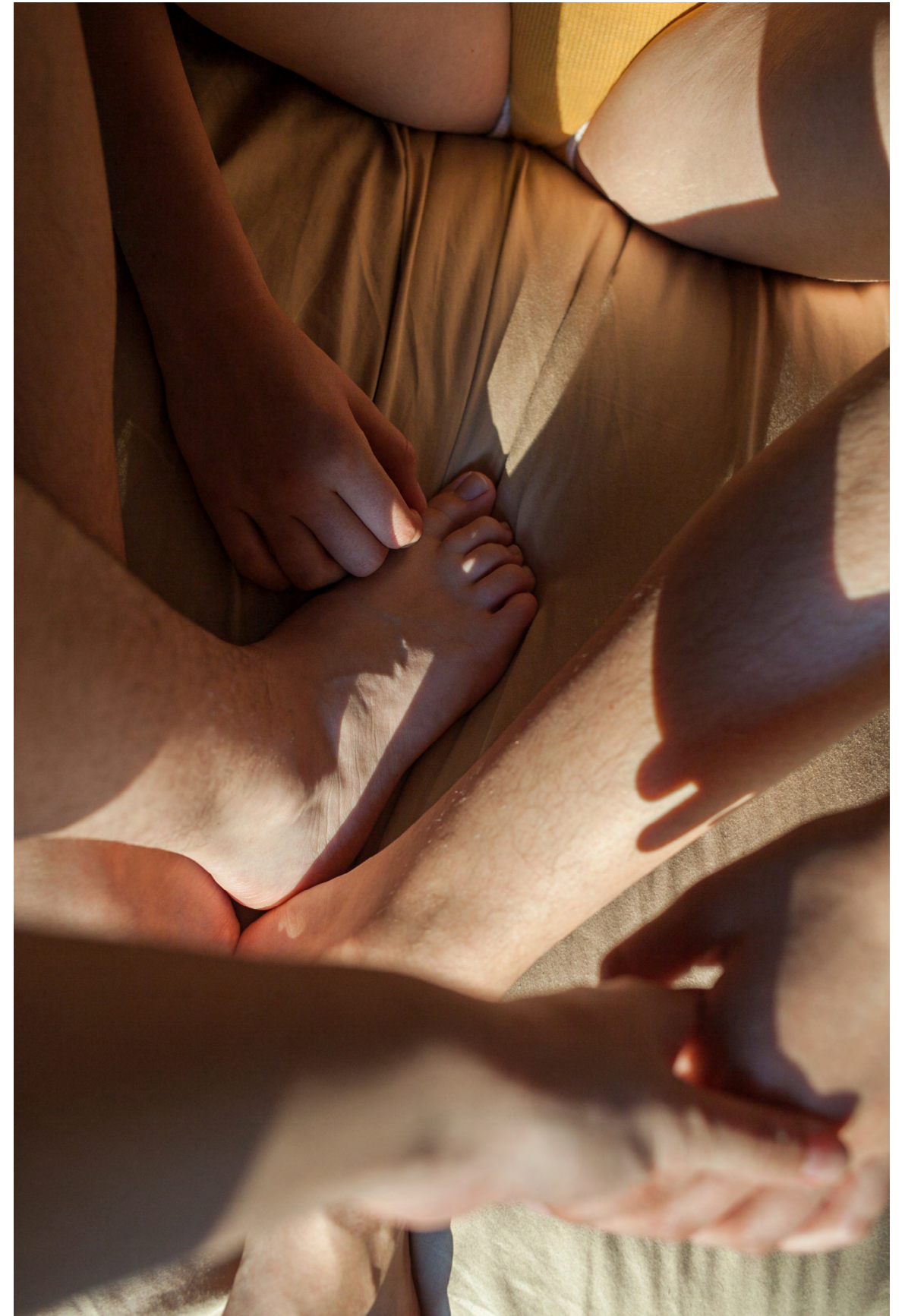
I go to the library sweating-  
drenched in guilt of noise making.  
Behind, under, in the shadows...  
Silently and not, you've made the heart sing.  
I go to the park dreading  
youth's penchant for creating  
azure, amber, violet strokes.  
Invisibly, you've made the heart green.  
I go to my bed aching,  
shaking, twitching and needing.  
In this childhood sanctuary-  
Impossibly, you've made yourself missing.  
Fruit sweet and sweating,  
Sinners singing pleading.  
Phantom spirits hissing-  
You'll also die dreaming.

Yaa Mensah-King





Untitled (Armpit), digital photograph, 2020: Mika Simoncelli



Untitled (Closely), digital photograph, 2020: Mika Simoncelli





Spackenkill: Jared Tennant



# (I SHOULD) GO TO SLEEP

I once read that memories are the mind's paintings.

In your portrait, the colors are fading, lingering wisps of love thoughts: golden leaves on fire, silver rain spilling from swollen clouds, wood chips eating my soles from the playground where you almost kissed me. I see you've designed new sketches though: two girls attached to your side, sticking their tongues out, and there are strobe lights blazing on a dark dance floor – I wonder, are you happy? Each illustration I scroll past blurs into a frenzied Jackson Pollock with splashes of White Claws and stains of perfected smiles.

Suddenly,

I so desperately want you to crave me in the same way I am devouring your sour posts. I poke and prod the opened artery, and oh, how it stings, but I keep going. The painting of us is losing its saturation, each intimate detail crumbling into the greyed canvas. But before my mind rests on how you once smelled like home and looked like joy and before my fingers find your contact name,

I turn off my phone and go to sleep.

Evie Huang



Basketball: Jacob Nathan





Melanie (2018): Carson Stachura



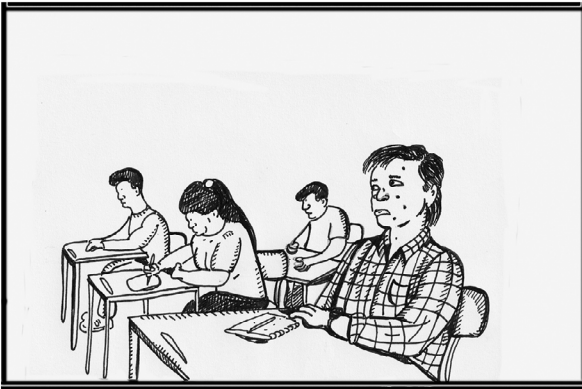
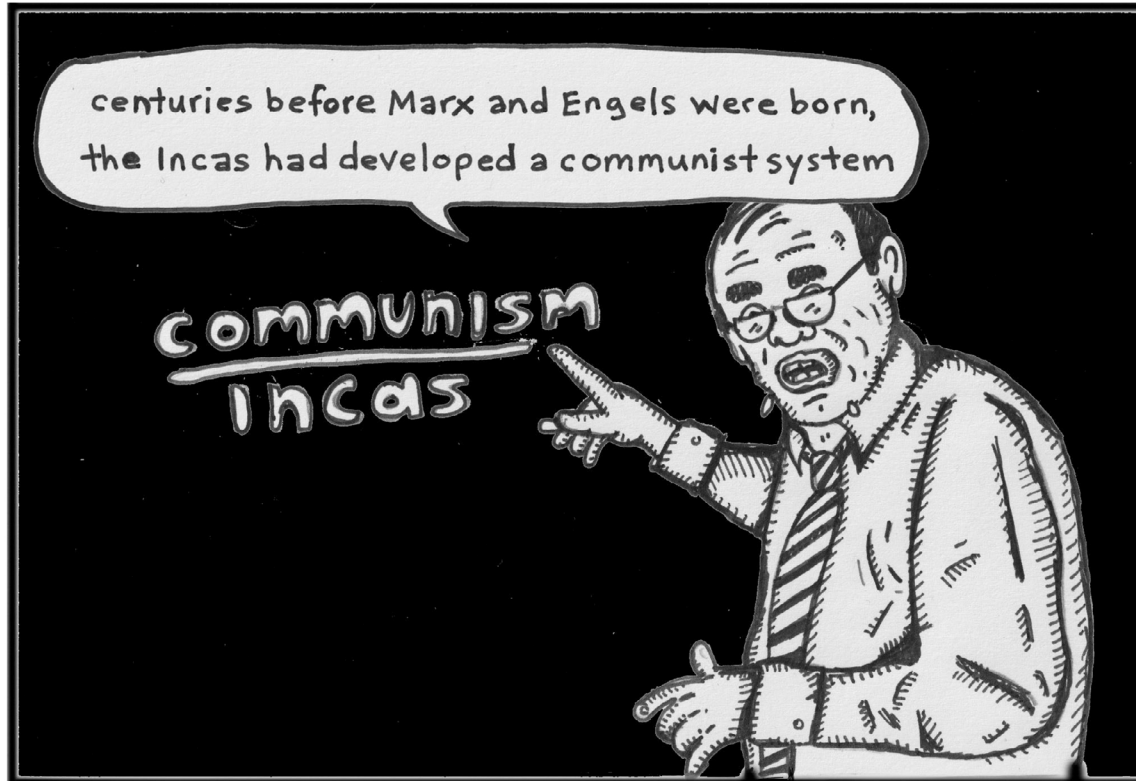


Noa with Remote Shutter, Age 14, digital photograph, 2020: Mika Simoncelli



9th grade  
social studies

by Morgan Miller







Spackenkill: Jared Tennant





Alias: Ella Floyd





High School Pearls: Lumi Tuomi



High School Pearls: Lumi Tuomi



# NEVUS

There's a scar where my resistance used to be.  
I used to have a big mole on my face  
Bang in the middle of my left cheek,  
Proud and pinky-brown  
About the size of a pencil eraser.

It was loud and ugly,  
Ugly in the best way,  
Like an eastern-bloc car or a wad of chewing gum,  
Ugly like graffiti, like rebellion,  
Ugly like me like me like me.

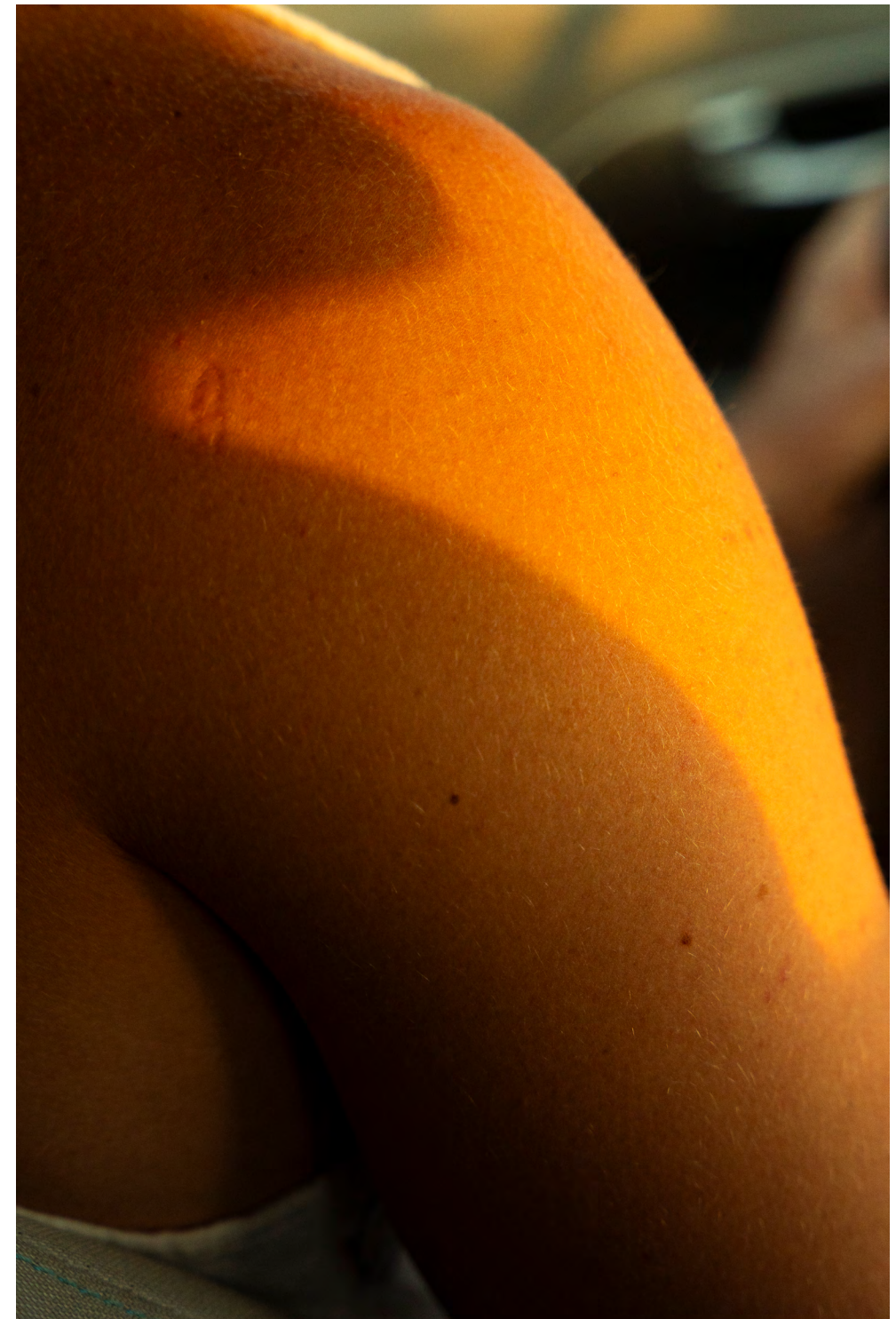
My mole confronted you with disorder and I let it.  
Like a stray hair or unscratchable itch.  
It had no desire to please you,  
My mole had no desire to brew your tea,  
My mole did not care if you were comfortable.

It laughed in the face of symmetry,  
It used to tell bad jokes,  
To eat too fast and ask for seconds,  
It used to loudly proclaim that it didn't care for pretty girls.  
Now it is dead - gone and sunk into a medical waste jar.

The doctor who did it was a nice man and a war criminal,  
I told him my cheek was political and he smiled nervously like he knew.

Nicole Thackwray





Under the Sun: Jacob Nathan



# LIES FOR LITTLE GIRLS

lies for little girls  
we lick them up like lollipops  
to get to the center of the tootsie roll  
how many licks does it take  
to find her-

midriff top  
spray of budding sex  
perfume lip balm lies tucked in  
her adult lady purse whispers  
*can I be desired*  
*still be me*

lies for little girls stuff socks down shirts  
breasts and bellies squeezed, pinched  
measured skirts, thighs erased  
lies stare back, filtered selfie gaze  
hearts, likes, comments  
spell out lies on freshly shaved legs  
*lookin' good babe*  
*you need to lose weight*

lies for little girls inhale pen vapes  
smoke in mirrors, exhale to face  
cement smiles on plastic doll face  
it's too hard to tell the truth  
succumb, submit just to please him  
*not me*  
*no, never me*

lies for little girls are  
lies we tell each other  
disguised as  
slumber party secrets

graffiti on bathroom walls  
confessions echo  
to be a girl  
a woman  
is to be sexual

how many partners or lack thereof  
measure her worth  
tell the other girls *she is hot, she is wanted, she is loved*  
tick the box  
which one are you?  
sexy and slutty a part of the gang?  
virginal and uptight a loser, a drag?

lies for little girls is virginity  
give it away quick guard it for life  
her hymen gold is encrusted contradiction saturated laws abide  
prude slut kitten sex pot arch your back plump your lips eat an ice cream  
suck his dick  
make it sexual,  
it is that easy

*what we are*  
*what you are*

lies for little girls is this  
sweet and pretty  
wrapped in a bubblegum bow  
twisted at both ends like a tootsie roll

Katherine Breeden





Lowell, 2013: Ellie Musgrave





Thunderdome, 2017: Ellie Musgrave



Anonymous: Sean Turner



# GOOD SLICE

In highschool we ate pizza at Vito's. It was a good slice there.

We had lockers to put our things. We had couches in the library and a red track. We had an auditorium with very uncomfortable wooden seats. We had a soccer field, and the other soccer field.

We ran. And we sang songs in the car. We had a parking lot and another parking lot.

My feelings were really really big then. Like so big, what the heck? I thought and felt everything viscerally. I thought I knew everything but also really knew I didn't.

I panicked the same way I do now, pacing, in circles. But I'm better at calming myself down now, and they come less frequently.

In highschool we ate pizza at Vito's and I didn't have to take a lactaid.

I'm going to be 27 in a week. The youth threshold feels like it's closing which is a thought that would piss of my parents. But it does. It feels like it's closing.

In highschool sometimes it felt like everything was closing and everything was opening.

In highschool we ate pasta and laughed.

We overreacted.

There was all of us, together.

Jen Klockner





Gisela, Summer Afternoon (2018): Carson Stachura



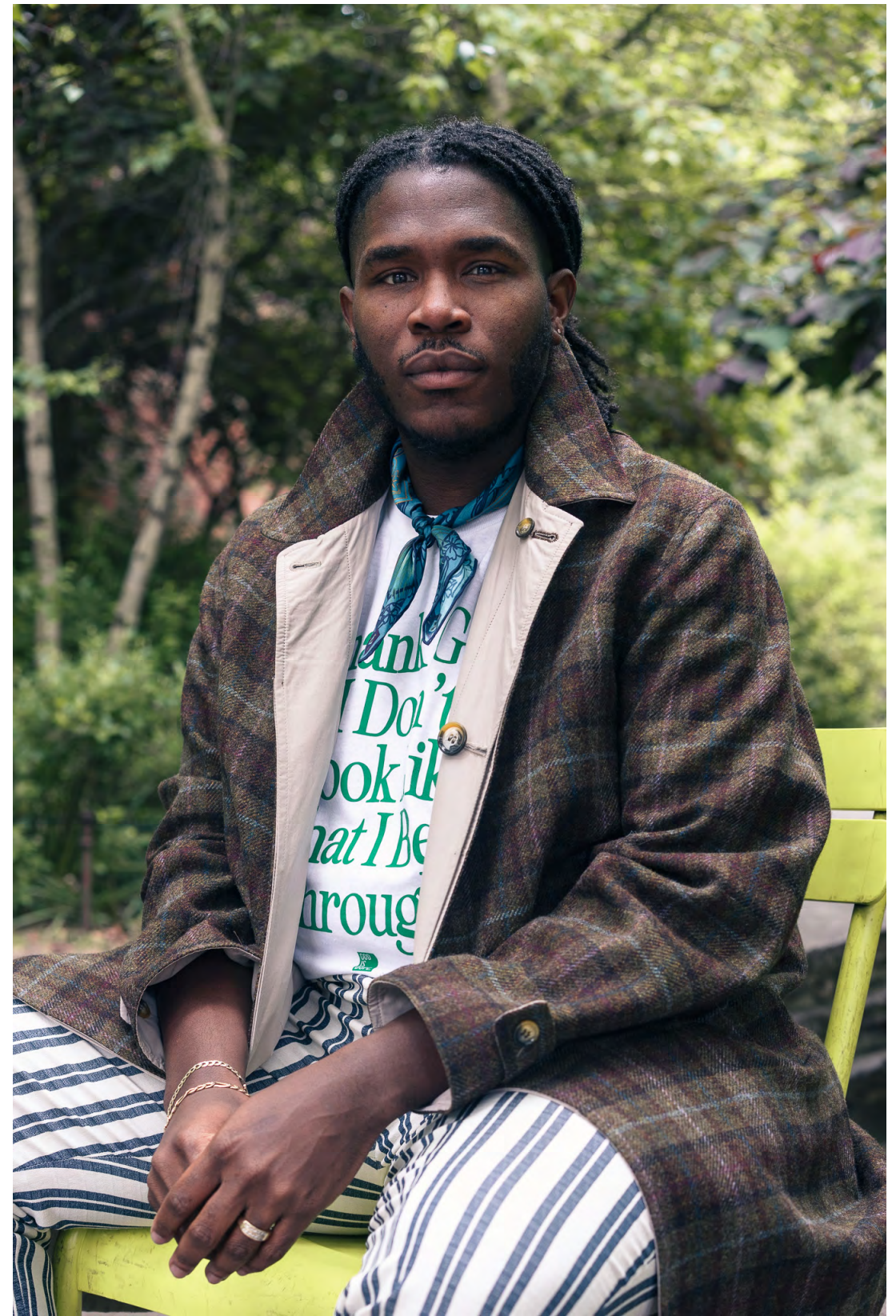


## TEENAGE DISCOVERIES

my bones were still stretching against skin, growing to build me while I tried to keep myself small. the everyday faces of humans not yet sure, faces unsure still of life, the world, whether they liked the sound of early birds better than the rush of city noise. hers was long and oval, framed by a curly head of hair. I did not have a name for the feeling, my heart fluttering frantically between my ribs, a bird trying to escape its golden cage. I fed it reassurances and rom-coms, convincing myself of crushes on actors on screens that would glow bluish in the nighttime. on the other tab, the cursor would blink, the quizzes always only one search away. am I?

Sina Aebischer





Portrait of Teddy for The One Who Got Away, Brooklyn, Summer 2023: Oliver Blank



# TEENAGE EULOGY.

no one believes I am chinese because I am snow colored with freckles from the sun but really they were planted by the irish. perhaps if they cut me open they will expect me to bleed guinness. my hidden identity saves me a punch in the face and an expectation to be good at math. it is a compliment to be called a good student but i want to be multifaceted and unique like a snowflake, which has now become a loaded word due to those who load their guns more than their minds. so my As become Bs but only on report cards and never on my body. i say i like train rides and he shows me the railroad tracks on his arms that he made with razors that keep his cheeks clean. he brags of his own personal transit and my teenaged self believes it is my new job to keep him from his next self-harm journey. another he, a different and equally terrible he, cuts off my tongue as men so often do to talk and talk while i am so invisible i become silence it-self. i wonder if the top song on his spotify end-of-year wrap playlist is the sound of his own voice. last summer i caught the bouquet at my cousin's wedding which i thought was supposed to give you good luck in love but now i think it was cursed. i am seventeen years old and this has been the worst year of my life. my most common phrase is i don't mind but really i mind very much. my tongue fumbles too much around the word no so it does something else instead. my body says no for me and now my soul lives in a sealed cave which no one can enter. my nails are always painted red because it is less expensive than to soak in your own blood. i do not smoke nor shoot any hard drugs but caffeine is a baby drug which i take with milk and caramel. it has given me what my mom calls a permanent swimming ring around the waistline but at least this means i will never drown. i want to scribble this note before this memory floats but i start and it is 3, 2, 1, pencils down. This particular time is up. everything else remains to be written.

Caitlyn Hasenfratz





Gisela, Ocean City (2018): Carson Stachura



Saltwater Quarry: Jacob Nathan



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Delilah Twersky  
Pearl Press  
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