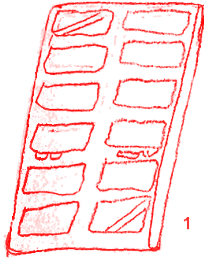




IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE EXHIBITION "MY FALL"
BY MAREN JENSEN
AT SMOKE THE MORN IN SANTA FE, NM USA
APRIL 2025





1



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The poem BYCATCH is an ekphrasis of the works featured in the exhibition *My Fall*. Each work is numbered here to align with the numbered order in the poem, which also uses the works titles to orient the reader .



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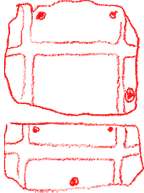
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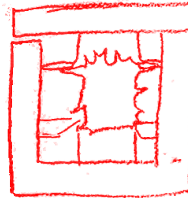
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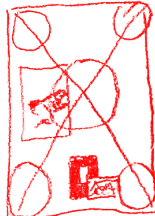
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15

cell phone photos, Iris Highway, and drawings
by monch jensen

BYCATCH ekphrasis by Tess Brown-Lavoie



In my best moments I think "Life has passed me by" and I am
content. -agnes martin

Iris Highway

The highway is a chute
when you drive on it for an entire day
when you drive on it,
the highway is a fate

the triangle of its wide boundary at your eye's periphery, the vanishing point the car is forever grasping for, becomes the shape of your eyes
the only stillness

much like death,
there is a disembodied romanticism to long-distance highway travel that presents a gross discordance with its lived reality
it is a hockney collage of Joshua tree route 66 distorted nostalgia yellow-dash flickering under the chassis of the truck; trail making
it is also saying a prayer that your physical body stays safely unseen while sleeping in the bed of your truck, walmart parking lots too alive, practicing the balance of
benzodiazepine

contemplation unbridled

using the side of the road as a bathroom in 17 degree weather
looking back at it the awe-some landscape painting framed by the rear window (you must)
the antelope flesh embedded into the pavement at 90mph a paint swipe of red an alchemical transfiguration from whole body to highway varnish
my own tires pack it further down into the road and I don't wince

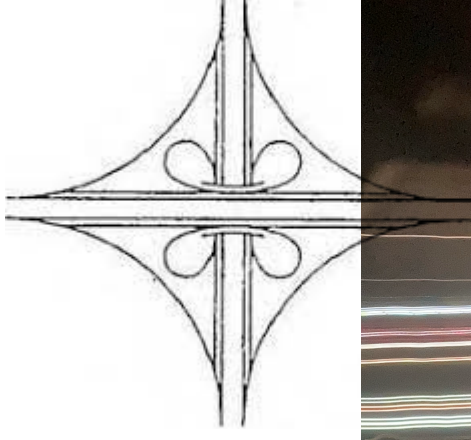
I'm watching a video tutorial on how to use a clover leaf-shaped minnow trap
"get the cheapest dog food you can find," my instructor commands, filling the center channel of the trap with bright orange lacquered looking kibble

and now I'm thinking about a hierarchy of deservingness,
does a bad dog get the cheapest dog food you can find?
a poor dog?

do poor bad dogs and minnows caught for bait share the same plane of valuation?
I want to know why the minnow trap is shaped like a clover, it is so beautiful to me, but it's not becoming clear
the video instead focuses on how best to turn the creek into a chute: an apparently free passage with edges
that passively assert their control;
trap

like,
the way a line is actually a demand, a use of force against the sovereignty of
shapelessness upon which a line now insists a border,
nonconsensual delineation
What, now nothing has to be a thing?
let me have no way to say it

the minnow trap is a drawing of a flower,
can you just body it?



This highway I saw from a plane once looked like an iris
its outline was glowing a yellow and mottled soft streetlight atop a black night canvas the illuminations of life after dark making glitter; orange, white, blue castings
a genitalic corporeality triggered in my eye the image of the tiny flame that hovers close around the end of a matchstick just after being struck
I feel it in my abdomen
and now the body of the plane stands in for mine its contained shape is the encirculation of skin around an opaque inside
the iris highway is the tiny flame that hovers close around the end of a matchstick just after being struck lighting a small matchstick-sized path of knowing
I am the tiny flame that hovers close around the end of a matchstick just after being struck

driving home from work I catch two men working together to fold a tarp, performing choreography that entraps them into an interdependent collaboration
I'm touched by their wordless poise, held-breath responsiveness, their watchfulness
they are really together now

two blue grommets corners are moved towards their opposite in parallel time and the short ends are brought close towards each of their chests
did their hands touch?

did they feel breath on their face?

could they sense the warmth of a day's sun stored in the flannel shirts on their backs?

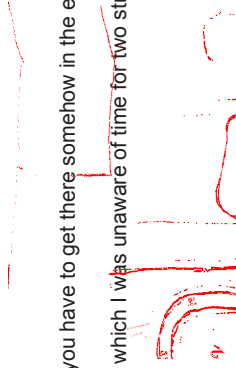
a third short end is made from the fold and they move back outward to bring taut this new dimension, repeating this score until the tarp is a small square

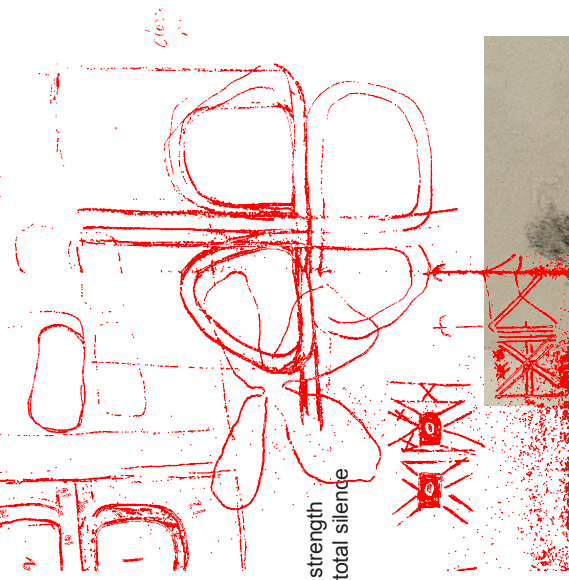
maybe I'm crying because I project a starvation of intimacy

or because witnessing the relief of co-dependency makes me think of Federici or some shit

the covert use of a back channel only inspires, adaptability being the most useful skill, a teacher told me, you have to get there somehow in the end

I was 28 with a handful of electrodes being applied to my scalp with small dots of glue for a sleep study in which I was unaware of time for two straight weeks
and I had found the petting lovers' hand





I've got a wide view on this hillside standing over highway 62
 I'm far enough away that the intensity with which the drone of the road can be heard is determined by the strength
 and direction of the wind, which means on a still day you can watch the cars whipping down the road in a total silence
 it's a pale yellow peach colored sand that can nearly swallow the distinction of any thing upon it
 but I can see the entire street-grid of this small desert town in a single sweep
 a rigidly authoritative civic imposition looking like a pencil doodle scratched idly in the sand

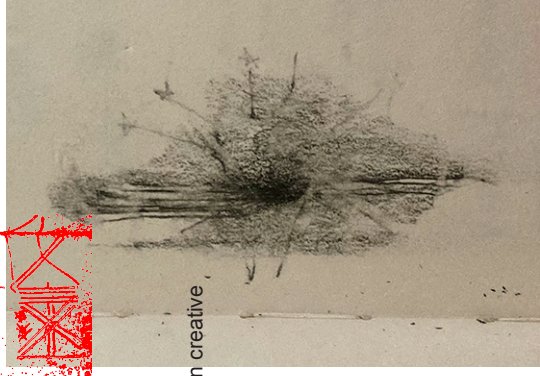
tiny and huge

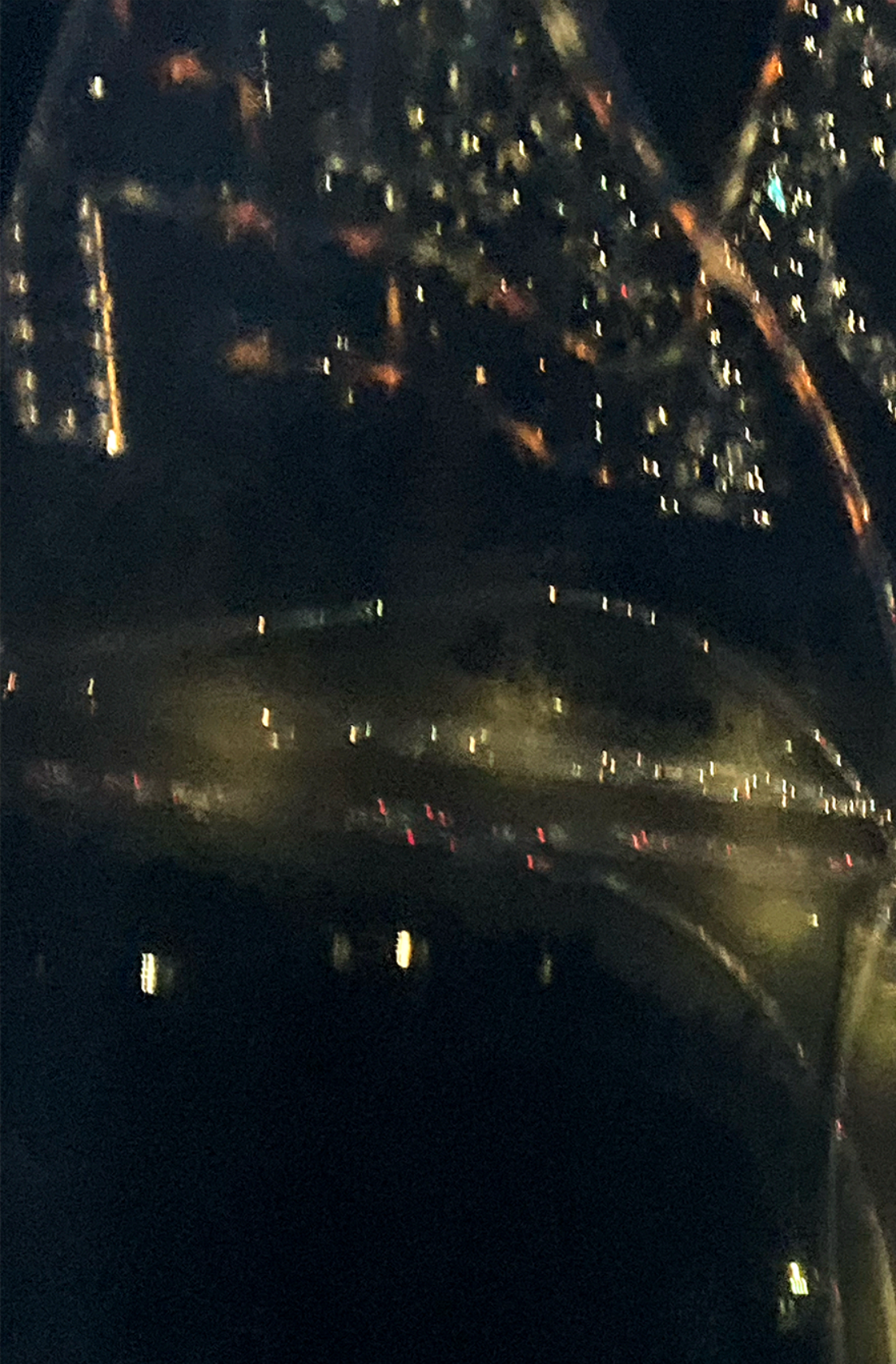
"free" expression of a Pioneering mind
 violent, flimsy

I cannot parse this mutuality

I close my eyes and the sand drawing is floating there inverted green saturation pulsing with my heartbeat
 and in the shower, under pelting water's music I see suddenly a distinct shape, rorschach that looks like
 a shield of armor, after-image of what
 with feet resting on the car mat for all my years of driving, does the shape absorb through the feet to be delivered outward in creative
 expression appearing as a seemingly abstract shape
 "free" expression
 to be delivered outward as a minnow trap

Iris Highway

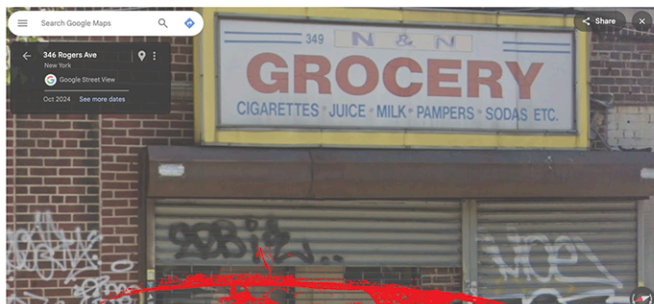


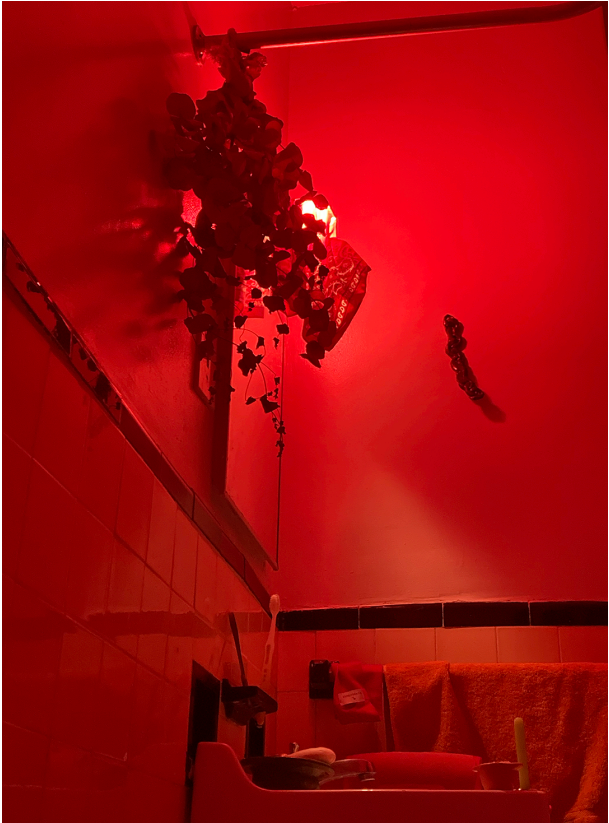






the corner of my desire
 to scream it out is only to hear
 repeated broken terrible echo
 I want I want I want
 invisible axe through the drywall
 finish desire





BYCATCH

after My fall by Maren Jensen



O_KEY

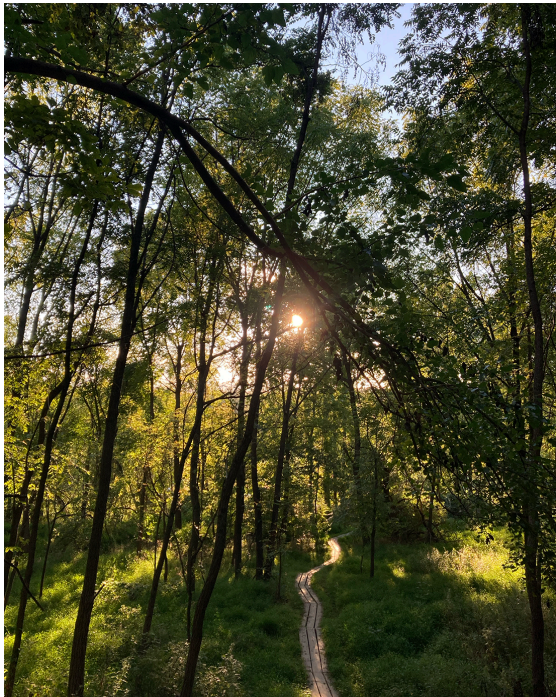
In the pavement on the corner of Linden Boulevard at Nostrand is a retired key: permanently wedded to ground, divorced from function or lock. It assumes the conditions of ground, imbedded with lite symbolism: a flickering between im/possibility of unlocking, undoing, this kind of false constancy that is honestly helpful some days to confront through periods of great upheaval when some moderate and temporary comfort can be taken in metaphor.

Due to proximity, being in the room now, or the adjacent room, and the channels moving between these two rooms and other sets of doubled rooms (distances between us and our lovers, closeness between us and our poems—the bed is located next to the desk)—this expository voice will slot in directly under the / of the painting (at a slant congruent to Wittig's) not by way of explanation but as location (vantage, prospect) from which to behold layers that accumulate on the surface. Here in the adjacent room the / can be

the flattened surface. Language aggregates less toward representation, more how accretion changes the surface condition: like grime shades the color of a building's facade, or spray paint on the bulkhead or street spells out finer contours of metal sheeting or concrete.

We are working with a couple notable failures: including rejection from the plasma donation because Maren's social security number didn't check out (strange) and my iron was too low (par for the course). And the day ended up being nice actually: Mickey cooked for us and Susanna came through. We generated a fair amount of unsubstantiated gossip in classic wet Providence, mud everywhere especially out at the farm, Heather drove me to the fish market, where I got Daniella a big fish that I baked with preserved lemons while she worked on the cube.

Somebody I respect says poets shouldn't do ekphrasis because it further subjugates our already abject circumstance in speech. But the devotional quality is what I like about description. I was looking. I was looking and was moved to speech. Language accumulates like trash on the street, similarly profuse, denigrated, maligned. Personally I'm not sure what the point of this index is but the act of collection and re-inscription structures my life, which is sealed into the land like the key in pavement.



1_Amber Clover & Wildflower

Neighbors perform a daily score of crashing and dragging (it's happening now) and music. Often at night sound shakes my bed awakening me. I can imagine the room exactly the shape of my room one floor overhead totally full of furniture that must be moved to make a path. The path shifts every night and morning: as an imagined murphy bed clangs down, chairs drag from the south to the north side, the dresser drawers bang to the floor as they are completely removed and replaced each day. My bedroom is a catchment system for the underground of this object accumulation (this is me using what I have).

The neighbor brings more furniture to the curb, dragging over it me, to the elevator, and out the house. She brings it through the basement, where our building collects its detritus in black bags and a weekly pile. *you can look closer as there are some details not legible here* (on the low res PDF). When the murphy bed's up, the frame parses the difference between a grid and grate: a horizontal plane for laying down or a surface against a wall, a painting hung temporarily, just until the photo can capture it.



2_ "I was weary after I slept, hungry after I ate, excited after I fucked, grieving after I cried—the present could not take shape" - robert glück (nasty green)

The phrase *beauty is in the eye of the beholder* translates lack of synchronicity between visible properties of the exterior and the mental/emotional state of the artist. The project here does involve tracking the momentum of my desire (possession sealed as such by my possessiveness, my language holds a thing in place) and marks it makes in the world (pulling the frame up from the basement where it has been discarded, a retrograde motion in tandem with other planetary bodies). You wrap it in linen, making it a "painting" in mutual reverence. When a tree is moved the root ball is wrapped in burlap like a tender gift to be slotted back in earth elsewhere. Someone makes this imperfect mark of protection to house the buried organ, underbelly overexposed in uproting. I don't know about destroying the material from overwork. Missing the mark of perfection I mean protection in wrapping, paint brings out (highlights) the stretch / stress. I learned the word *unendlich* to describe a sushi buffet in Portugal and it's actually come in handy a few times since. This trance mix blends with the underlayer of a bass beat from the television upstairs.



3_clover highway

Pattern recognition is the spice of life. Never know if I'm naturally falling in love with a form or just seeking richer flavors amidst threats of banality, making a game of time through cathexis. You know when you're driving for days with days of driving ahead and the sense of entrapment inside the linear goal oscillates with total freedom of time set aside for gross movement, just getting from there to there. Signs are scrubbed out off buildings from a different era, the whole point of this town is unknowable. It had its own momentum and now we're here just passing through.

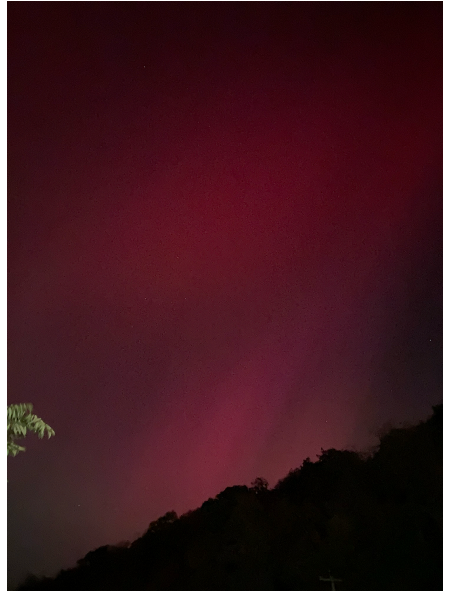
4_bycatch

We index the gestures that initiate a found object into its new condition as an important object in movement notation. There is need for language for it. When I found the net we used to scaffold Binh's mobile (did I note the origin aloud) on the beach on my dad's birthday the same year he died there was a sudden recognition (who rescued who). Approach. Collection (bent over). Hold up against sky (asking). Rinse in salt water, shake off sand.

Years later the net becomes significant at a new threshold. It seems important to let the objects sluice through my possession, peeling up the sticker, clinging less to the artifact and more to the choreo. I am possessive of concept, the armature stays, but let the object slide. It was already going (the way of all things) and the slide is my style.

5_test page

In light of too many dissolutions to register cogently, lyric leaves the only path 'forward'— as though relief from the stomach ache (diffuse origins) could be drawn out to occupy only the plane of a page, revoked from depth and time, further dimensions. Diffuse airbrush mark reverse engineers the present weight of the world to illustrate how it accumulates, it weighs down the page in the color of blood that marks our soap for weeks.



6_discipline (big star)

Here to discuss this downfall, a fall from grace. Fallen with a god gesture: delaying the terminus, rescuing precious trash from the landfill. The loose material quality / sound of change jangling in the pocket, fingering a woolen ball beside it, hair and lint collecting into a soft form. Teasing these things apart and arranging them: this constitutes a day. I run down a roll of film near the cemetery: a bouquet of mop heads, a fake plant next to a statue standing contraposto with a chain around its waist locked to the fence.

After Mary died I come through. The lily stems are almost bare, just a few blooms. This is two weeks later. Everyday I read the news with a sense that too much is obliterated, falling off, downfallen, confronted on my run with the multitudinous miracle of buildings in a city. Today the nasty towers of garbage bags outside the apartment buildings actually seem quite tidy and clean.

7_ discipline (little star)

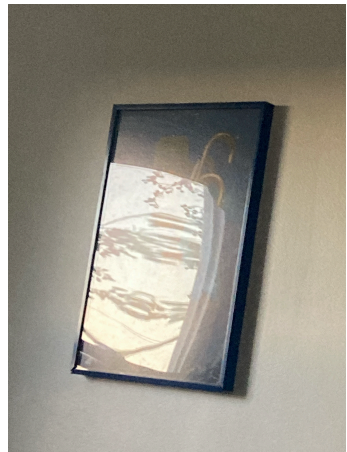
Drawing in relief (like a grave rubbing registers the inscription over ground given to the buried dead) (and also registers the texture and firmness of stone), reading too deep, proliferation of stickers with their clinging messages, how gender is rendered unspeakable in sex—fallen through floor like the basebeat while the scaffold holds up the shape that holds form in the face of liquid.



8_interim something

Lusty poems make patchwork of my life. Copying out the dream notebook, scrolling up through our conversation to pull the parts that render the paradigm, surrender to constraints: procedures *born of having absolutely no money—why struggle? This is here. Why does it need to be something else?*

I am also working with what I have: too much distance, an apartment kind of far out from the center of things, a noise problem and big rooms I don't want to live without, some rich mom's old couch that honestly is very threadbare at this point, patched with the same fabric that's glued on here, and dented with many years of laying there wondering what will happen next, a flare up over what is mine and what runs over me as though I was the town off the highway exit. It's true none of this was imaginable then, all indiscernible from that prior time. Some of it is way better than I could have dreamed and some of it's far bleaker, a lot has been lost, some has even been stolen, the color red swells to fill the frame, stain the sink, and paint the crisis new.



9_cara cara

From a very sweet winter orange. My hands were full and I was coming or going, the sticker loosened on my finger and I left it there on the door. What you don't know is it's a reference to the apartment on Putnam Street where I had a strange version of home, in some way more accurate for how it was not guaranteed. I didn't even have a key. They kept coffee beans from the coop in an aluminum canister like the one I use now, and the lid was thoroughly papered with fruit stickers. I had one on the gear shifter of my station wagon, along with a visitor pass I kept from the same night we first fucked. We went to the store first for lemongrass and got a taxi home in the rain. I do think it protects us or makes plain the taste of arrival and welcomes us home.



10_cookie jar

Everything now subject to heat, fire, mediated bombs we watch vivid—or the burned down houses of people we know and don't know leave cookie jars and bathtubs behind, alongside the inexplicable survival of Sam Richardson's car (Susan showed me the photo). I want to say *inflagration*, mixing *conflagration* and *inflammation* I guess, noting the way the surface speaks to or can't hide conditions of the depths. No clear sequence between cause and effect, only heat unendlich between the sparks that catch and ones that rise and sputter out.

Pathetic fallacy working overtime today with a cruddy sky and seasonless cold, an expression of terrible in-betweenness, dreadful limbo, like the soul in its passage within 49 days since death, amidst destructions that have started but are nowhere near completion. *staring out the window with writhing yearning that I couldn't picture*. Mud slumped across the frame, made hard and fragile in firing. I think there is some possibility for transformation in the pictureless frustration, am still looking for a way in.

This ones my favorite. I have a special place for that gunmetal gray. You want it to accumulate textual material on it but I think it's good as is, looks like metal but made of earth, written already by heat.





11_wretch

Fingers splayed open, casting a net wider. You are waiting for something in particular (to happen, or arrive). We look up the word and find it means make an unsuccessful effort to vomit and laugh about failing even at this.

sex stuff / something is about to happen
something cant be completed, but experiencing the movement
physically wretched / retch / wrenching sensation
this was the shape of the stomach ache



12_fridge pallet (agony)

An object even or especially without a name, lucky to be pulled off the street and into the relative safety of the apartment, body mod rendered with a loving hammer, fabric, glue. Imagine. Despite my noise complaint I'm doing okay. My desire reaches across borders, it is strong and determined enough to do that, it doesn't care at all. The road is still intact here at least for now.

13_supercluster

The eastbound route starts strong and geologically impressive and with only a third left traffic swallows you and the world feels small again. Missing mom's birthday last May felt more tragic than it should have been. Service wasn't good headed into the sand dunes, which you understand, but anyway better to go in reverse toward altitude and sunset.

The Manhattan Bridge has a clover on ramp on the Brooklyn side. I cross to the city at least twice a week sometimes more such as last week going to the Mens Only day at the baths. I was turned away. The city is large but contained by my own leg strength which I earn back after the cold lifts and snow melts revealing sand and trash kicked up off the torn up street taken in through the eye holes.



14_my screentime

My students stifle a laugh when I say the garden was full of bugles bags and blunt wrappers before we sweated over it to remake the soil structure and do something with a decade that was burning a hole in our pocket.

And now I see this marking everywhere. Knowing the language of municipal hazards doesn't soothe me. I can't ignore the blue tape and trying brings it out more. Now along Dean Street there are long linear cuts in the pavement, like it'll be opened, or dissembled, or broken through to an underlayer. I run them over like a train track in the 4th of 6 or so arbitrary segments to the ride home. Holding them separate so they aggregate. Being almost there.

15_dec. 2

You know you're far gone when a single word feels too heavy handed but I know what you mean. Some words can't move around without being noticed except in disguise like celebrities. I said to my colleague in the stairwell *I love to see you* and before I was finished she said *I love you too* and in light of escalation I said - because of the time Sahar pressed me to say it back. It's important to some people though the repetition in the stairwell was certainly too much.

This garbage relation. This difficult entanglement with possession, possessiveness, and owning something. After two arguments in a week about intellectual property I wished I was like the street where mass accrues collectively, we own it together, but no. At the end I have the dirt of the day all over me, my own. I bring it back, wash it off, put it down on a designated surface or prospective altar. Here is another business that's not viable. Here is an artifact that means nothing yet.

ENDNOTE

Biking home a bit later, at a greater distance from the beach, it's spring, night, and there's the scent of rain without rain. The streets smell like divine absence. An eclipse rinses details out. I meet Laura on the curb and we both have presents. I give her a root beer and she gives me half the incense sticks the owner of the shop gave her for being honest about how much money she actually owed when he undercharged her. I put them in my kangaroo pouch and we bike to north Brooklyn, and when we arrive the sticks are gone.

While I go to Emily's reading Laura retraces our steps looking for the bundle but doesn't find them, arrives home and her bike light is missing. I bike home almost over it but not quite, in a cloud of fog, particulate wetness suspends against my skin, cruising mostly straightaways without putting feet to ground from Williamsburg to Flatbush, no red lights. They're pouring concrete on Linden Boulevard which is a relief because the pitted carved up street was impossible to ride on. The streets are always torn up about summer. The street is closed tonight, petrichor mixes with the poison smell of tar, and Maren texts me to say the key pressed into the boulevard is gone, and with it all its vague signification, pointing at layers of detritus that come off us, pouring into the street, filth and metal. A blade without a slit to carve open, without a message, without direction. It once opened a door.

Whether or not the new street will have that same soupy pavement edge from 18 wheelers taking it too soon I'll be testing the margin on 2 wheels, either looking to lift over the dippy parts, hold tighter, batten down the hatches, or just lose more stuff from my pockets. Some subtle details were also loosened, dropped, fished out, shedded, and left behind at the node. The new street is tacky. The stickiness holds the bycatch. Plastic netting, shredded bags, or these words cling to the street's gravity with the logic of physics and geology meaning nothing beyond a slow dissolution into microplastics, whose performance of thorough leeching is related to the paradigm of this puppet show and, more significantly, how I am learning about love.





Where is a breeze that will change the present, so hard to inhabit?
-Robert Glück



Making this show I am without a studio and using my luckily very large bedroom to create most of this work. I am also without much money at this time and have found that leaning into the collection of trash, the surrender of using what comes to you, has been a conceptual framework that also takes mercy on my wallet. Because the apartment building I live in has close to one hundred separate units, the basement is a space of discard and has provided me with much material. I found two wooden platforms I learned are called "bunkie boards," which are used to provide support for your bed frame, kind of like a box spring but without the bulk of depth. I took them up to my room and ripped off the strange synthetic fabric covering that catches on your hangnails as you brush a hand against it, thinking it would serve me as a useful means to stretch linen and canvas to dye. But leaned against my wall long enough I became attached to their presentation, and they now feature largely in this show. The street, like the literal sidewalk, provided me with enumerative cathectable tchotchkes, a fridge pallet that looked special, a pack of hanes t-shirts. I want to bow in worship to the fruit sticker stuck to the lid of the peanut jar, to the ripped-off corner of a kid's bedazzled school artwork, to the "burning in hell" tag that helps me feel into the brutality of this world that closes only further in. I used linen leftover from a time I had more money and patchworked it onto the panel, making plain the need. I love that Dolly Parton song A Coat of Many Colors; the practice of adaptability, finding the workaround, the backchannel, the means as you can find them or define them, and proud of it.



I want to share some thank yous here, as this show and zine have been made only with the generosity of many and nothing is really done alone, despite the overwhelming nature of loneliness, enumeration of our points of contact can help—it's an honor to be alive and to be helped

Stacy chat for the indispensable and life saving group chats, grace for your home heart garage your confidence and meatball, tess for the honor of being looked at through your writing and for teaching me the words cathexis and bycatch, fay for housing me last fall as I wobbled, nina for keeping me warm with our conversation and the generosity of your studio and car, daniella for inspiring me to share and ask for help, heather (and jody and teal) for making me family and lending me your sharp mind, brooke for your sweetness pie spa studio and printer, tanner kris steph gone fishin, lamb and tess for the frequent lending of the kia soul, al for gassing me up and the hosting (expansive sense of word), mickey for your boot drawing the honor of being matchmade and for your cooking, christopher rey perez for helping me with Iris Highway, erin dougherty for metal shop guidance, this apartment (and tess again) for being the single constant, the sidewalk, sophia fay and tess with whom I spent a day making a baby mobile with tess' years-collected memorabilia that planted a seed of thinking for this show, and of course, mom dad zach eden tate forever, and of course this list goes on and on

"exposure of
logic"

