



**THE
RACKET | 42**

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THE RACKET

Hi.

How is everyone?

I've been more socially active over the course of the last few weekends than I have been since the beginning of the quarantine. This isn't saying much - a fried chicken lunch in a park, a sit-down meal outside of a breezy restaurant - but it's certainly a thawing of what has been a rigid attitude towards hanging out during the pandemic.

I don't really know how I feel about it.

On one hand, I'm a social person and seeing friends and interacting in a way that harkens back to the before times is a salve to the raw panic I find myself swimming in on occasion. On the other, being outside in the world is a constant reminder that people (safely or not) are, with vaccine dreams of shoulder-to-shoulder parties and buffet brunches flitting through our heads, starting to move past this. People are hugging again, outdoor areas at restaurants are packed again, the world is reemerging from an imposed hibernation.

And as much as I want to be, I'm not quite ready for it.

Part of this is the fear that we're all so eager for "normalcy" that we're jumping the gun (as we do) and we'll find ourselves back in lockdown, a new wave of pandemic crashing over us. Mostly though, it feels like we're hurtling forward so quickly there won't ever be any sort of clean break between quarantine and not. Things will slowly return to a forced approximation of what we knew before and this world-altering era will awkwardly slip into our memories.

Understandably, a pandemic isn't an event so much, you can't stand on a battleship and proclaim victory with flags snapping in the background. Rather, the disease will slowly be beaten back by vaccine and safety measures until it's no more than a scary moment in history you tell your kids about. Until it is the plasticky rush of fear we feel unsuspectingly in the middle of a crowded party and can't exactly put a finger on what might have caused it.

After all this time though, after carrying this unseen weight for so long, I want someone to tell me it's over.

It's idealistic, I know, but I want a figure of authority to tell me I don't have to be scared anymore. That I can walk around without a mask outside and not think about dodging an invisible bullet. That hugging a friend doesn't come with a greasy sheen of guilt. I want a proclamation from a trusted source because I want to start the process of collective grieving, of celebration, of starting to understand what this nascent, vulnerable world now looks like. And without the child's dream of a clear ending I can point at, I'm worried about all of our abilities to actually do so.

This said, I want to move on, and even if it's more likely than not, there will ever be a defining moment that gives me permission to do so, eventually I will.

Eventually, we all will, whatever this looks like.

Because, ready or not, that's what we do.

'Till next time.

-N

The Racket stands against
police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

SUPPORT AAPI COMMUNITIES

STOP AAPI HATE

<https://stopaapihate.org/>

ASIAN PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

<http://apen4ej.org/>

SAVE OUR CHINATOWNS

<https://www.saveourchinatowns.org/>

BLACK LIVES MATTER

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

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Website: <http://www.fritzchesnut.com>

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Big day. BIG day.

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

WE HAVE A PATREON

We aren't in this for the money.

That said: there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

If so, we're working on some special rewards. And we know you love special rewards.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

MATTHEW CARNEY
CATHY & JOHN SANDERS
HALLIE YOUNG
JAMIE ENGELMANN
CASEY BENNETT
LILIAN CAYLEE
LAUREN C. JOHNSON
ANGIE MCDONALD
QUYNH-AN PHAN
SPENCER TIERNEY
JUSTIN & SARAH SANDERS
ALEX MACEDA
DAVID SANDERS
SARAMANDA SWIGART
DANIELLE TRUPPI
RUTHIE WAGMORE
RANDY WORKMAN

SASHA BERNSTEIN
ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN
KATHRYN CLARK
YVONNE DALSCHE
KEVIN DUBLIN
YALITZA FERRERAS
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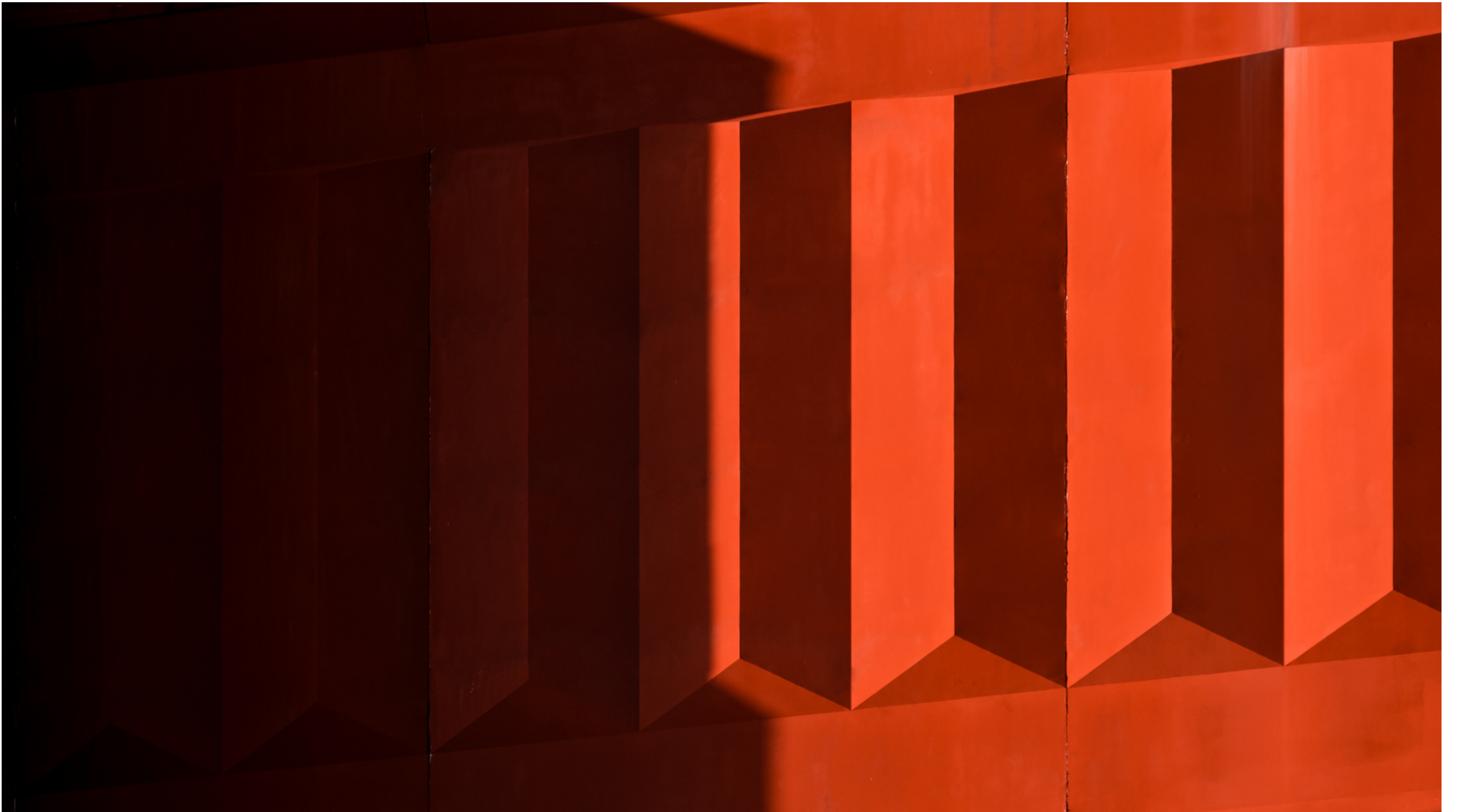
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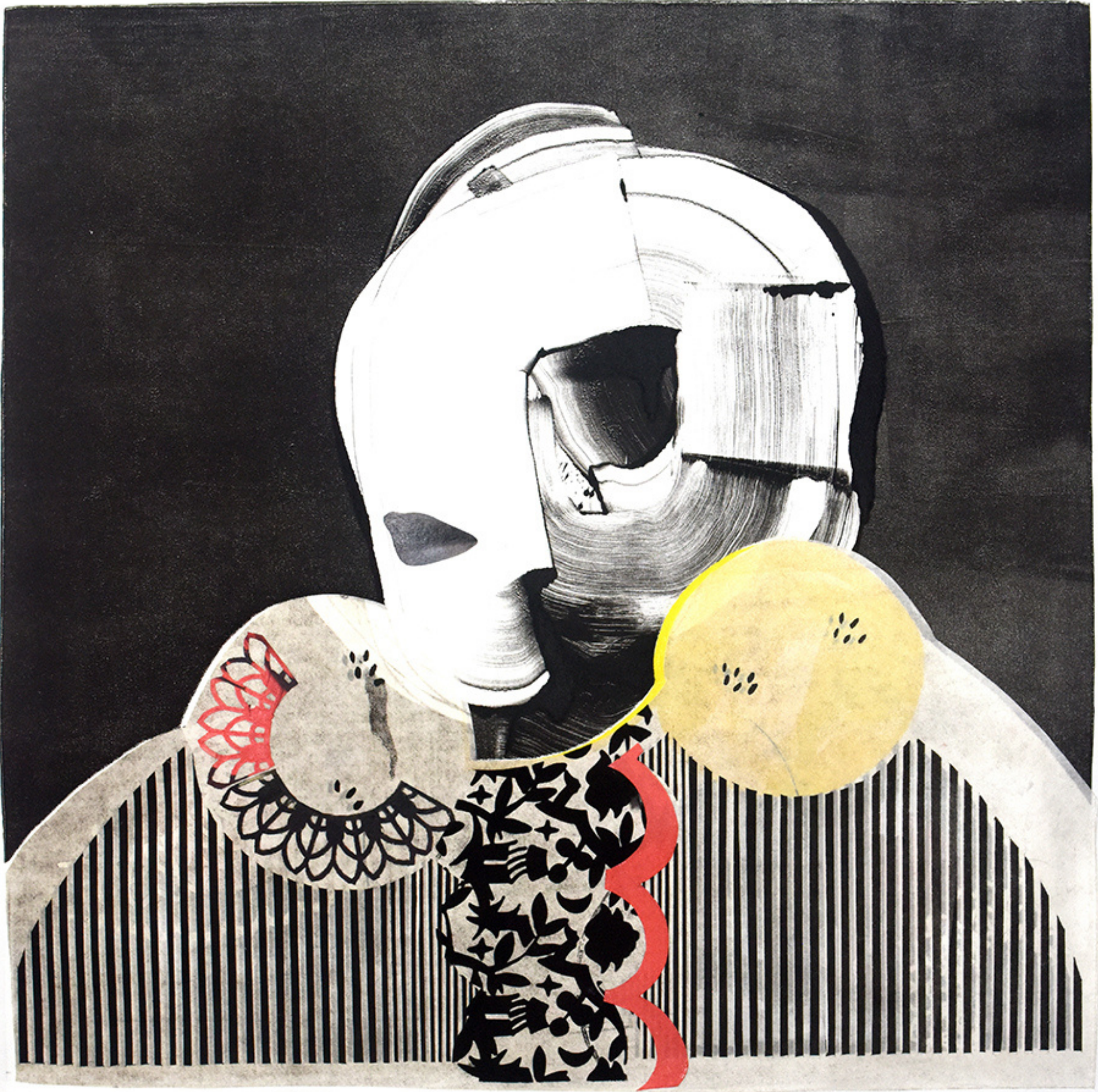
UNTITLED
MICHAEL YUAN
2019

Oymyakon

MADISON YOEST

In the room between home and freezing, his mother dresses him in six layers, all to be seeped in frost after thirty minutes. He cannot tell the white sky from the white ground and chases after fattened horses to see if they leave footprints. The mucus in his nose freezes until cracking with each breath, harmonizing with hardened snow between his feet and the thing beneath it. A man on a reindeer yells at him to not exercise the delicacy—the grocery store has already shrunk to corner shop. On his forest path, he multiplies the number of icicles on his eyelashes by boughs stripped of snowy blanket. Today, he is unable to practice his nine times table until math class. He builds a snowman of his coats in the fabric flooded hall, and enters the room wearing a shirt he had forgotten the color of. At his table, an empty seat waits for a girl whose body failed to remain lukewarm on her way to school. During first flight, a bird freezes somewhere between nest and ground. In the heated building, the lessons melt in the air before reaching him. He does not remember nine times seven. Sweater two is put on after jacket three. Now, as he kicks the body of trees trying to shake loose a carcass with wings outstretched, the rhythm of his foot muffles that of time.

A mother waits five
minutes more, her son sings to
the ice of childhood.



DREAMS TO THOUGHTS
JAYNE FOSTER
2019



UNTITLED 9
JAYNE FOSTER
2019

Dear Davin,

CRAIG COTTER

All correspondence dealt with this long weekend
threw it away.

Hook-up today with Ricky,
Asian, 5-7, 115.

Taped above my desk:

--Last date The Beatles recorded

--Welcome ticket to Laos

--Contest rules from a bag of Lays Crab & Ginger Potato Chips from Thailand

--Fortune from Chinese cookie:

"LEARN CHINESE—Don't matter (not related)"

--Paris Metro ticket

--Post-it with both of Frank O'Hara's birthdays

*

Walked West Hollywood looking for KJ.

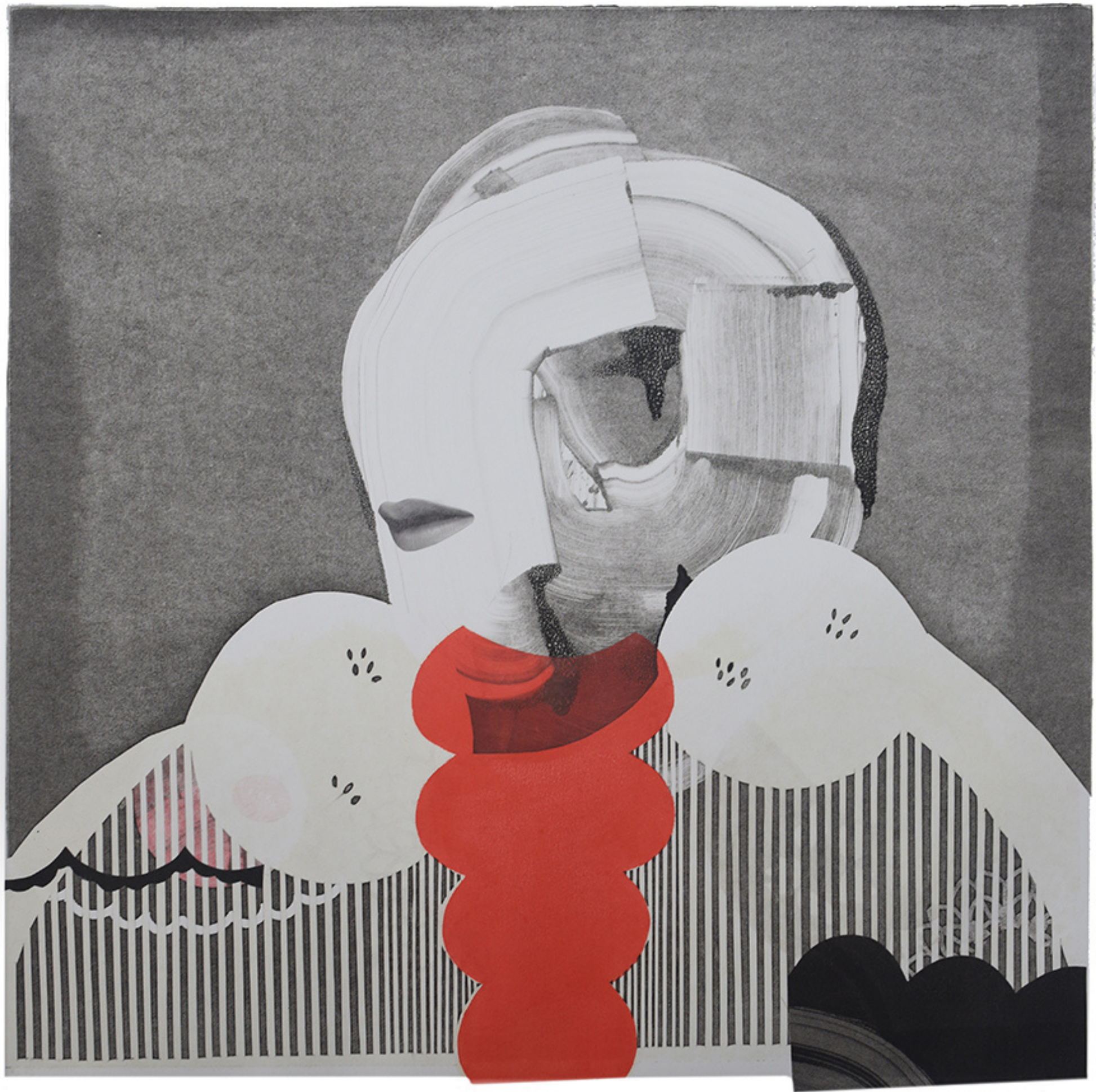
Mano added two Buddha images to our altar today.

And brought me fried bananas from The Palms.

*

You're right water is a pretty cool molecule.

It's nice to get out clean
like we know what we're doing.



DAY DREAMS OF UNKNOWN
JAYNE FOSTER
2019

my daily little ritual

YERRIE CHOO

I have a problem picking my fingers. I'm unsure when it started but it has been a method to soothe my neuroses ever since I've had a functioning memory. People always tell me to leave them alone but the urge is too deep. Friends and lovers would stop me, temporarily halting my nasty habit, but once they looked away and/or went to the bathroom, I would frantically pick as much as I could before I was again under their dutiful watch. Then I'd be alone, just me and my fingers performing our daily, dirty little ritual.

It's a dumb system really. I can't find a better description for it. A hangnail will appear. I pick it off because I want a smooth surface. Just one pick and I'll be over it. Just one. One won't hurt as long as I monitor myself. But I know the truth - one is never enough. As my nail enters the first layer of skin, the hangnail gets longer and peels off, sometimes with resistance and other times, easy like room temperature butter. Picking the last part quickly is crucial for a clean result. However, my fingers are not precise peeling machines, so I end up creating new, seductive little hangnails around the lopsided perimeter of freshly picked, raw skin. The urge increases. I go for it again. At times, the peeling runs so deep that it bleeds, so I suck on the area to clean off the blood. Occasionally, the spot bleeds for five or seven minutes straight until it clots and turns into an unsightly, dark scab. I usually stop here as it is inconvenient to have constantly bleeding hands. I don't want little blood stains everywhere but sometimes I fail to hide the evidence. I know that as long as I keep picking, reaching the goal of smooth skin is futile but my brain seems to accept the delusion I have created: regardless of its destructive nature, this act feels productive and gives me a satisfying sense of control.

There are methods to stop. One way is to move around, or find things to keep these busy hands occupied. Some suggest I draw a tick mark every time I get an urge. Or, I can get a stress ball and breathe deeply instead. I could moisturize the areas whenever I wanted to pick, which would be more beneficial and less destructive, but eventually, I would cave. Sometimes, I get nail clippers to cut off the hangnails so I won't have anything to pick but I end up bulldozing the area, removing large parts of skin in a short period of time. Other times I google pictures of chewed up fingers in hopes to be so grossed out that I stop. Perhaps I am too stubborn or it is too deeply ingrained in me but at this point, nothing replaces the pleasure and ease that I feel picking my fingers.

People ask me if it's because I'm nervous, anxious, or stressed. The genesis may have been from such neurotic tendencies but at this point, it's second nature. I pick in all states. I do it without thinking and mostly when I'm sitting around. I pick during drawings and while thinking about what my next mark on the paper will be. I pick during a chat to add another dimension to the conversation. When I worked in offices and sat a lot, it was worse. One time I collected all the skin in an hour to see how much I picked to shame myself. I created a whole little pile of hand-picked cuticle shavings which sat neatly on a piece of scratch paper next to the keyboard. However, I did not feel shame but felt awe.

My hands are almost always red and raw. I am reminded of how sensitive nerves are under the initial layer of skin when I eat salted nuts and squeeze fresh lemons from my neighbor's tree. An ex once told me it looked like I put my hands in an acid bath and this imagery deterred me for half a day. One person looked at my fingers with intrigue and encouraged my behavior. "Don't stop," her round eyes and perfect face looked lovingly at my near bleeding fingers. "It's so interesting," she said as her perfect, unpicked, and delicate hands let go of my mangled ones gently.

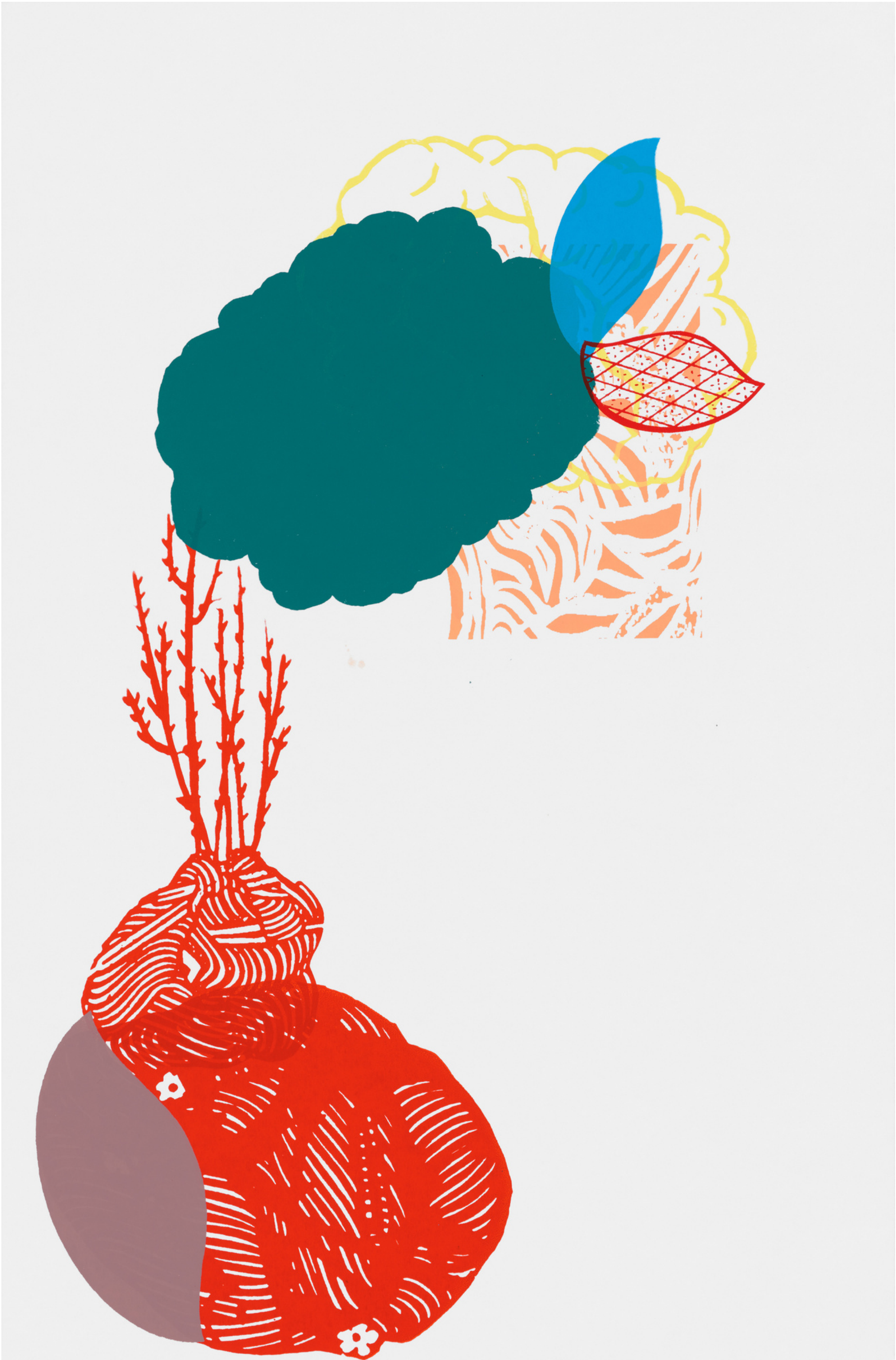
I wonder if I could have made extra money being a hand model or if there's any benefit to stopping besides cosmetic reasons. Because it's not life threatening nor is it hindering me from getting laid, the urge to stop is not as strong as my urge to pick. Maybe this off-putting gesture is disrespectful to my hands, two essential parts of my body that I so heavily depend on. People tell me it's bad and it most likely is. It's unsightly but not as



noticeable as if I had picked my face or lips, which I used to do and have thankfully stopped. Maybe I should stop because it doesn't benefit me and it's a symbol to others that I have some sort of mental condition that they shouldn't know about. Appearing put together is encouraged in our social world and maybe people with chewed up fingers like me don't look all together. But it's my normal, so I am not bothered by how they look.

At this point, the chewed up fingers have become a part of myself, a normalized body modification like a tattoo or piercing, except tattoos and piercings are more accepted forms of this than mutilated fingers. I sometimes look at my fingers with curiosity, amazed at how different the lines under my nails are on my right, heavily picked fingers as opposed to my lightly picked left. Other times, they gross me out, especially after a bath or shower when the picked areas prune up and look like strange coral. I wonder if my fingers will ever return to looking normal if I dispose of this ritual.

Regardless, here I am, still picking. I'm unsure when I'll stop or what will make me stop but it is now a regular part of my life. Maybe I'm ignorant and someday I'll have to cut off my right hand because my constant open wounds invited a nasty infection. Maybe I'm in such denial of how heavy my anxiety really is that it's cosmetically destroying my hands. Perhaps I'll stop once I've discovered true self-love after reading five self-help books and finally practicing meditation. But til then, I'll continue to smear my fingers in aquaphor and do my best to hide my unsightly hands from you.



Sophia: Grieving

KAI SUGIOKA-STONE

The echo of your "fuck you's" down 18th
The vicious slap of your vans against their cement
the screaming at the wind.

Dolores ran through us
and we threw our tiny legs in second-dividing anger down the metal slide
did I mention we screamed at the wind

the setting oracle of sun across the shaded, welcoming, cool playground

we ate her cats;
Oreos and Bubbles
for breakfast, lunch, and dinner,
and the fourth dessert
flipping them onto firm mattresses
making them into flapjacks
Losing every landing
And all nine lives.

As we were suffocated by guerrero
in its bars lost to time
its murals lost to high end restaurants
and its people lost to pavement

we opened our mouths
and our lungs
in a storm
were devoured by the tiny bubbles of air.

The pigeon we covered in tiny dry leaves
next to the wooden boat
and ascended with a shoebox
to be transitioned by animal control with love
what piece of your heart
did its wings take away?



EVER SO
SARAH KLEIN
2020



WHEN BLOSSOMS
SARAH KLEIN
2020

Leaving the Party

GEOFF CALLARD

A man, let's say in his fifty-second year, bobs in the gentle swell, elated, buoyant, floating along the lakeshore, clothed in stars. He ignores the shouts across the water, wanting no further part of his companions; their darkness and deck chairs, slumped bodies, fat pale lives girdled by baggy shorts, half-drunk bottles of beer and bourbon.

'This is where it begins', he thinks
as he clambers through the lakeweed and silty mud,
climbs over rocks, brushes the star-lit water from his body,
then walks on pine-scented paths into the shadows.



UNTITLED
MICHAEL YUAN
2020

**THE
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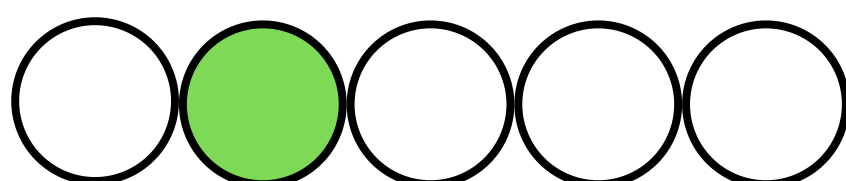
BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

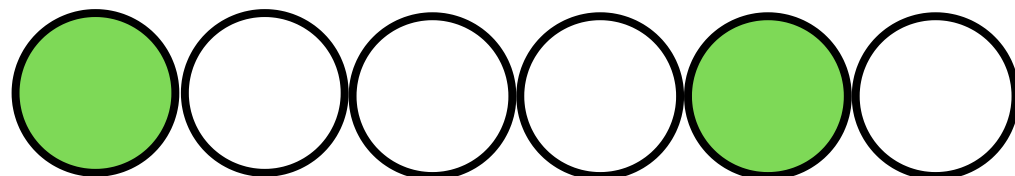
WORD STUFF

Unscramble each Mumble to form five ordinary words.
Then, arrange the green letters in the highlighted spaces to
complete the punchline.

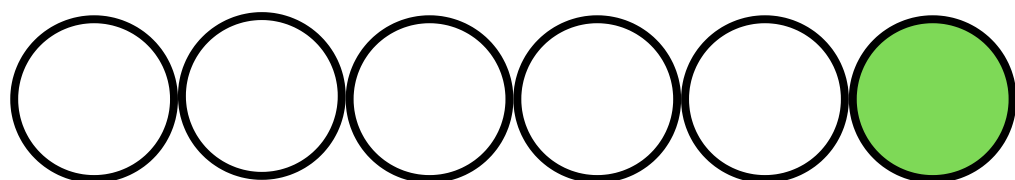
ETPSE



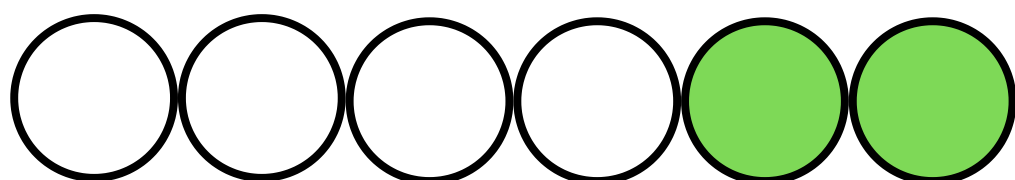
IINSRA



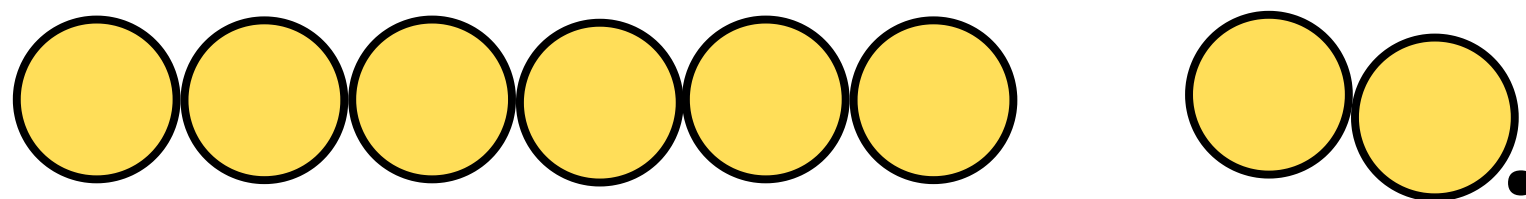
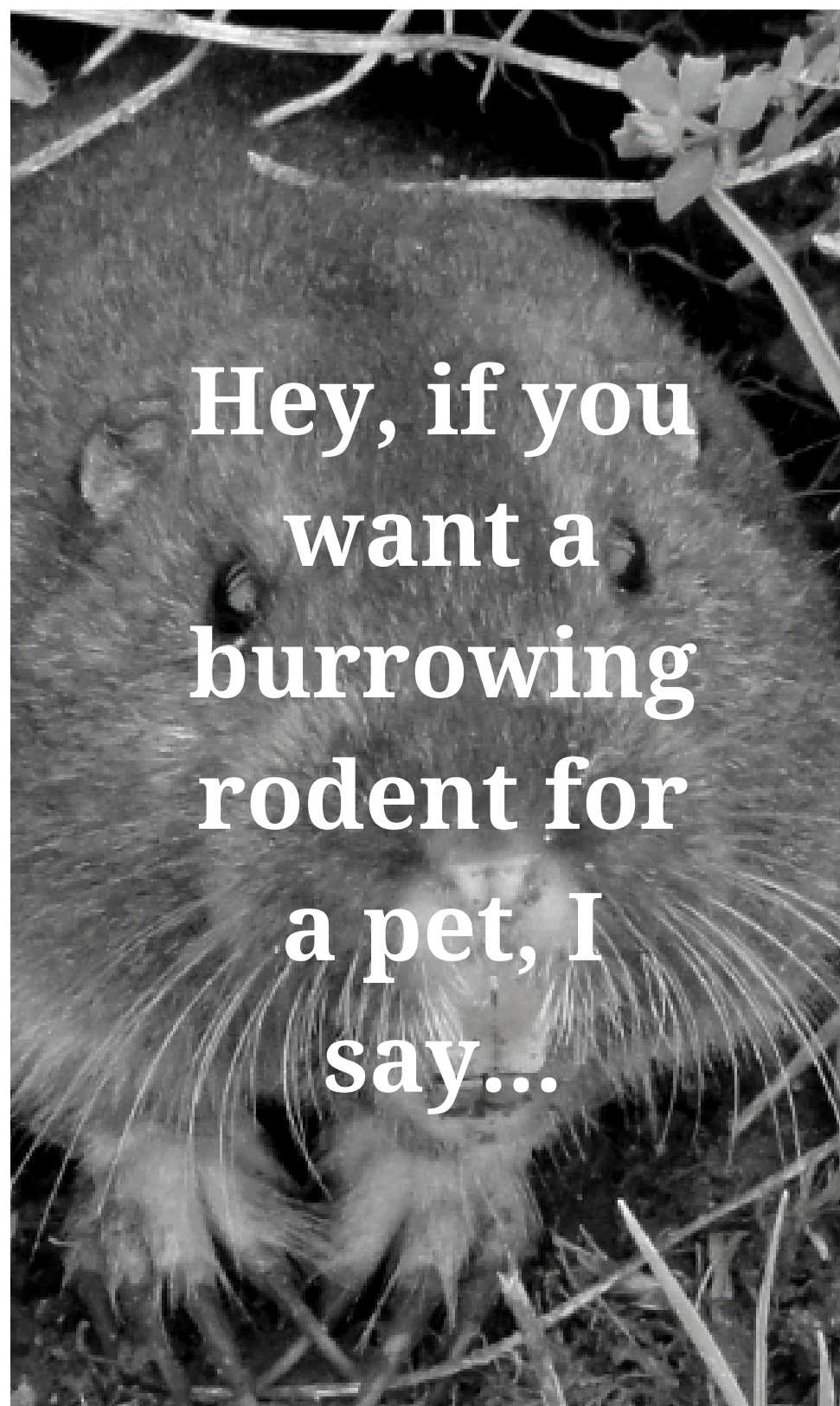
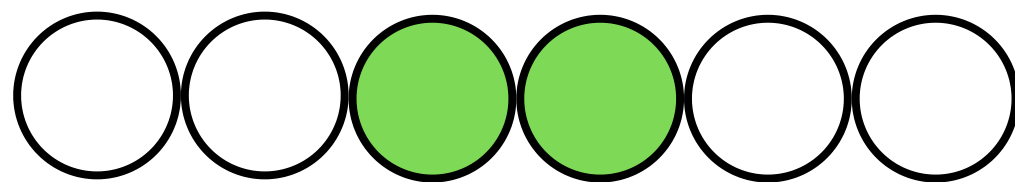
HCCNIL



GAENEG



EOPOPS



(Answers next week.)

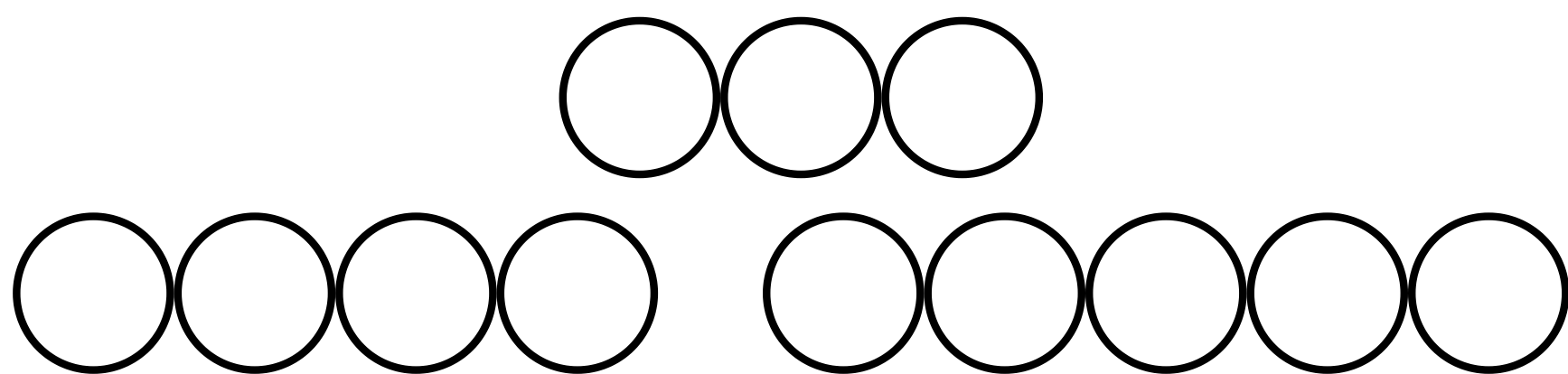
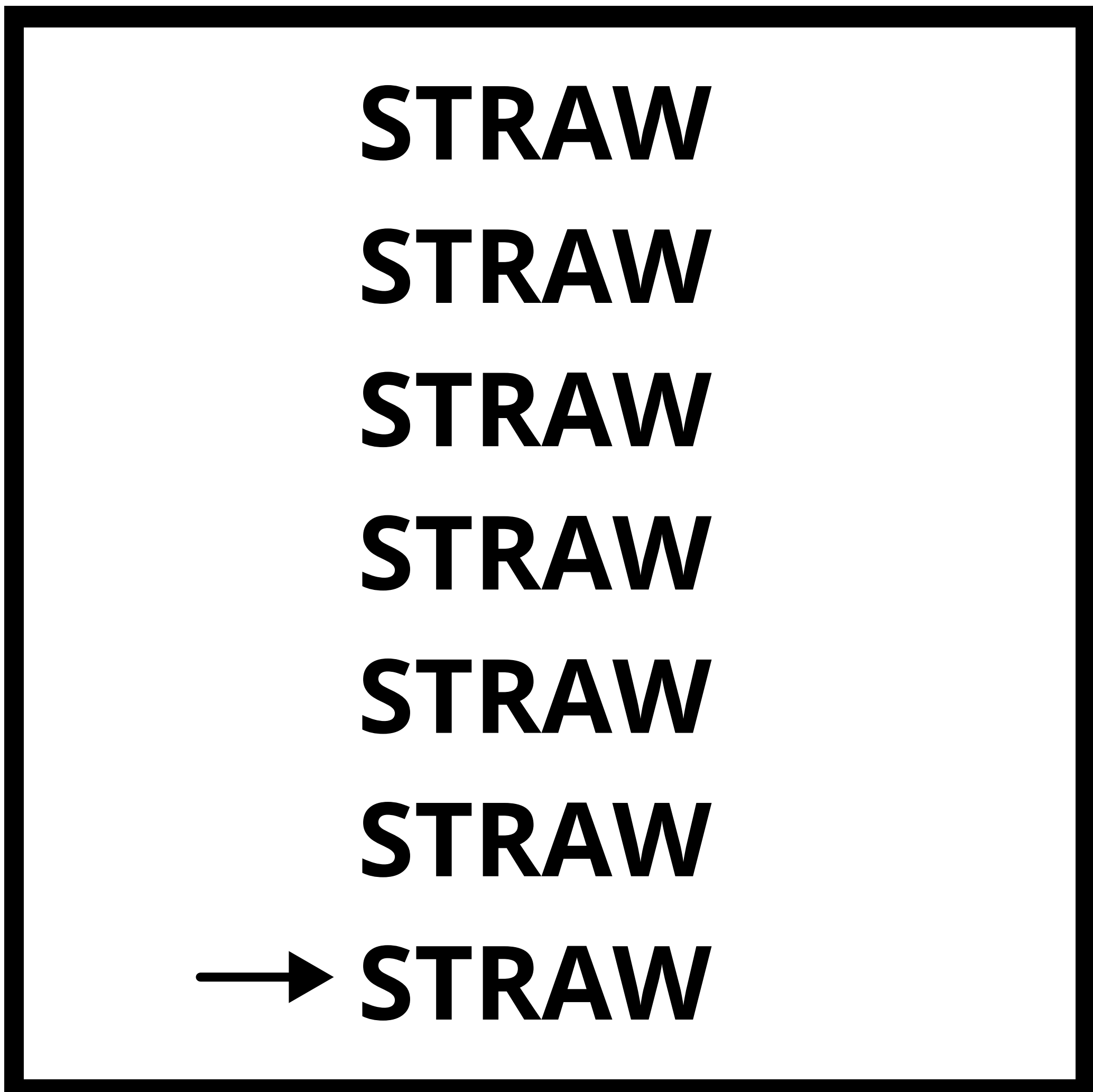
Last week's answers:

FLIRT, WHOSE, UPROAR, STODGY, OBLONG

Marriage has pros and cons.
On one hand you get to wear a ring.
On the other you *don't*.

HUSTLE & REBUSTLE

Decipher the rebus to reveal a word or phrase that fits in the circles below.
(Remember: One letter per circle.)



LAST WEEK'S ANSWER

barking up the wrong tree

CONTRIBUTORS

GEOFF CALLARD
FRITZ CHESNUT
YERRIE CHOO
CRAIG COTTER
JAYNE FOSTER
SARAH KLEIN
KAI SUGIOKA-STONE
MADISON YOEST
MICHAEL YUAN

THE RACKET

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**BUZZER
BEATER.**

