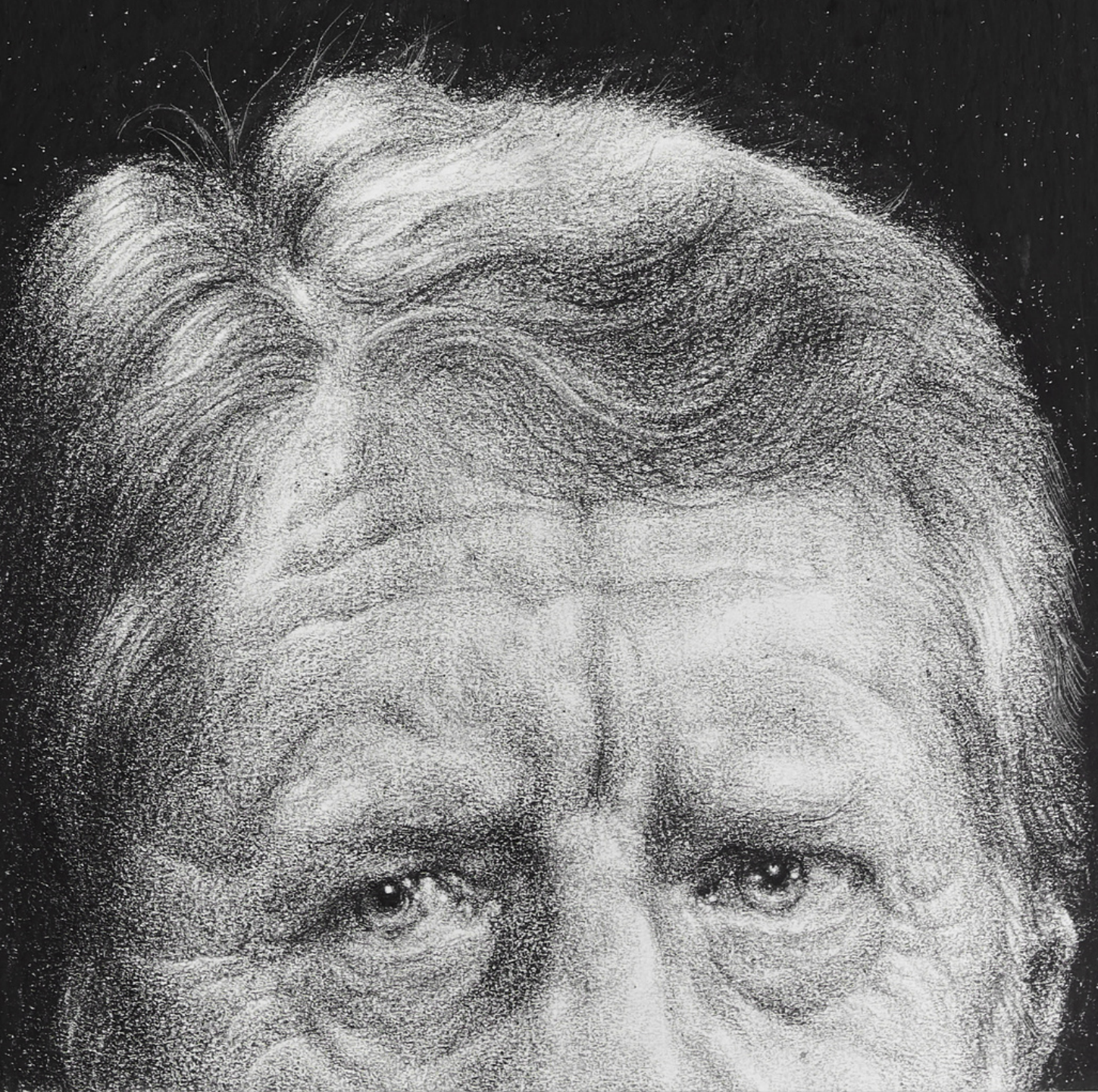


THE RACKET | 46



THE RACKET | 46

THE RACKET

Hi.

How is everyone?

I'm struggling to think of anything to write this week.

And it's not because there isn't an enormous amount going on in my life, but rather, because there's been so many big, life-changing events in such a short period. I'm overwhelmed.

I have been sitting here staring at my screen trying to will some notion of thought on to this digital page but my ideas are running in every direction and I just keep writing and deleting and writing and deleting.

Oddly enough, I think part of my inability to process everything is that all of the big events occurring are amazing, exciting steps forward for me. As you might've noticed if you read this intro letter on a weekly basis, regardless of how good something is I can almost always find some angle to view it warily.

It isn't to say that everything going on right now isn't rife with anxieties and unknowns and that my most cynical instincts aren't working overtime to pull them apart. It's just that, simply put, I'm more than just happy for whatever happens next—I'm excited.

Writing about the positives, the exciting things, the glaringly good events in any year, let alone a year like this, well, it isn't my strength. I'm always trying to pick apart what feels amazing because I don't want to be disappointed if it doesn't hold up.

So when things are, and I feel like baiting the universe right now even by writing it, **great**, I don't know exactly what to do with myself.

Don't get me wrong, I could start pulling at the loose strings a little bit harder or flip the future-tripping switch (my secret superpower) and fill this page up with a sketchy collection of fears undoubtedly.

But you know what? I don't want to.

I'm lucky, I have had it pretty easy this last year. But the closer we get to the world turning back on, the more hellish the landscape receding behind us looks.

It has been a hard year. And even if this moment of untarnished optimism is a fleeting one, I'm going to try and enjoy it while I can.

That said, we'll be taking a break for at least a couple weeks after this issue and I'm sure when I come back my quiver of doom and gloom will once again be full.

'Till then,

-N

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

END POLICE BRUTALITY

CAMPAIGN ZERO

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

COMMUNITIES AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY

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

DEFUND SFPD

<https://defundsfpdnow.com/#do-something>

BLACK LIVES MATTER

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

THE RACKET : QUARANTINE JOURNAL, Vol. 3, NO. 46

Copyright 2021
The Racket

Cover Image: Vincent Valdez

Credit: © Vincent Valdez

Title/Date: *Since 1977 / 2019*

Courtesy of the artist and Matthew Brown Los Angeles.

Website: <https://vincentvaldezstudio.com/>

IG: [@vincentvaldez77](https://www.instagram.com/vincentvaldez77)

Promotional rights only.

This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without permission from individual authors.

The scanning, uploading and distribution of this document via the internet or any other means without the permission of the author(s) is illegal.

A hand gesture that says "everything is lining up."

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
SASHA BERNSTEIN

ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN
GEOFF CALLARD
KATHRYN CLARK
YVONNE DALSCHE
KEVIN DUBLIN
YALITZA FERRERAS
TOMAS MONIZ
ALEX NISNEVICH
NICK O'BRIEN
LAUREN PARKER
KRISTA POSELL
FRANCESCA ROBERTSON
DANIEL SCHWARTZBAUM
ARJUN THAKKAR
KURT WALLACE
JUDY WEIL

OUR PATREON:

WWW.PATREON.COM/THERACKETREADINGSERIES

SUBMIT YOUR WORK

P O E T R Y

P R O S E

A R T

2 0 0 0 W O R D S

O R L E S S

Send to:

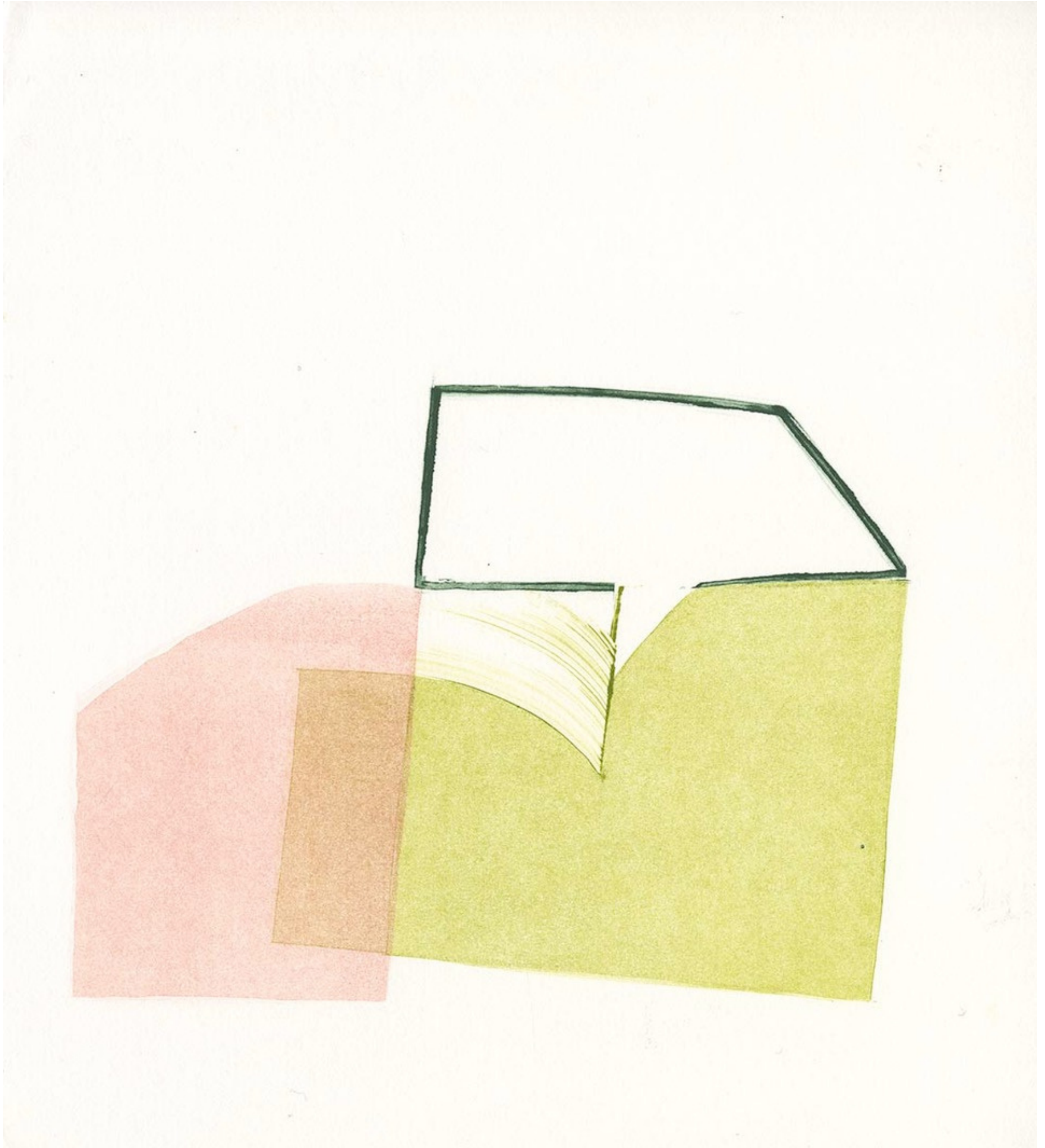
theracketreadingseries@gmail.com

CONTENTS

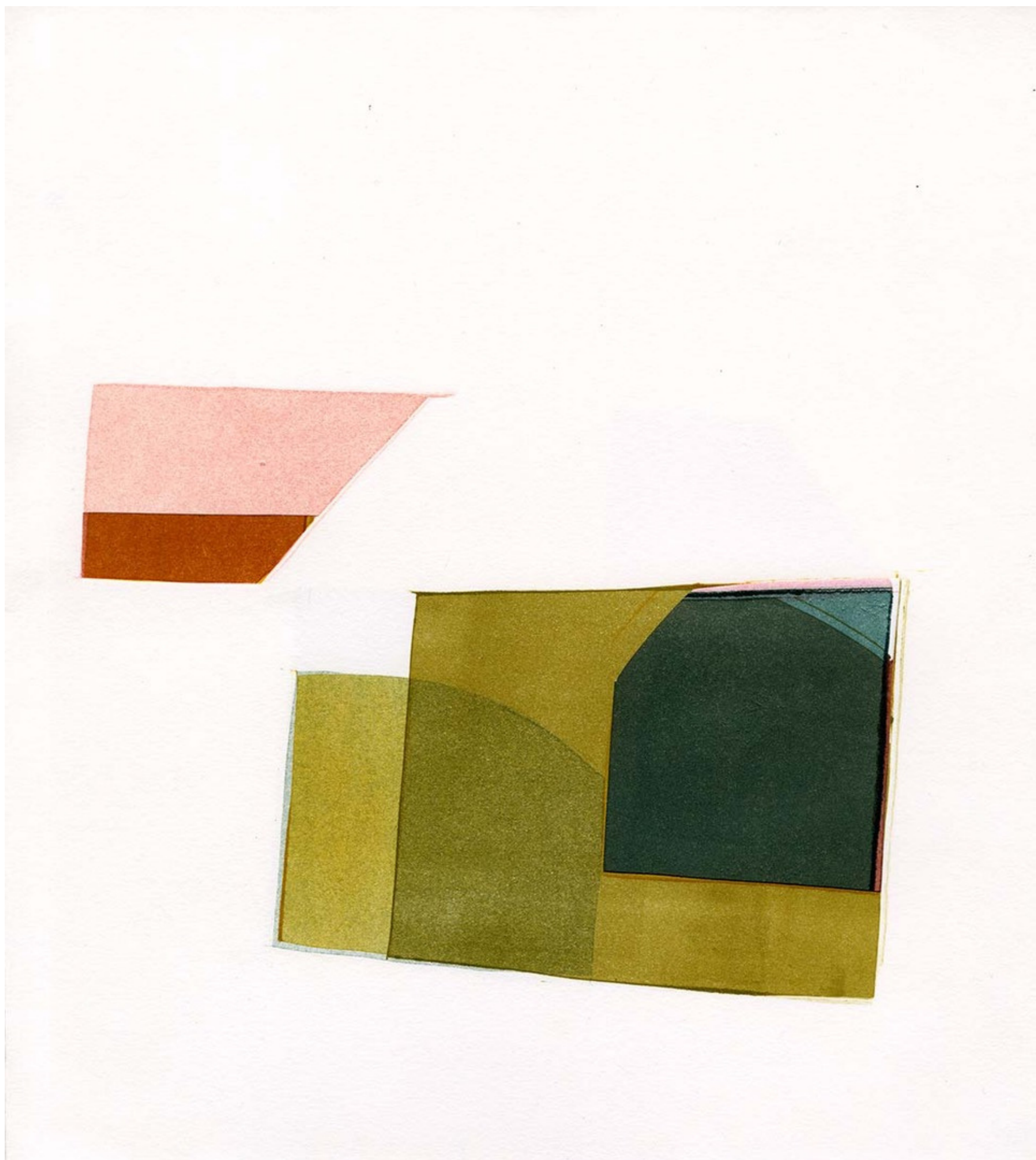
CORRINE HATT	<i>Untitled</i>	1
CORRINE HATT	<i>Untitled</i>	2
MAGDELINE MAHER	POEM 5: Scene where I let a white woman cut my hair and I cry	3
LIAN NG	<i>Virtual Reality B</i>	5
LIAN NG	<i>Virtual Reality A</i>	6
REBECCA PATRASCU	Last Days on the Cul-de-Sac	7
ANGELICA TRIMBLE-YANU	<i>Ascend</i>	8
ANGELICA TRIMBLE-YANU	<i>The Sun Bathed Everything</i>	10
ANGELICA TRIMBLE-YANU	<i>You Look To See What the Light Let's In</i>	12
J.G.STEEN	The Landmine (A Love Story)	13
LIAN NG	<i>Virtual Reality C</i>	15
LIAN NG	<i>Virtual Reality D</i>	16
GRACE DILGER	Ken Poem	17
CORRINE HATT	<i>Untitled</i>	19
CORRINE HATT	<i>Untitled</i>	20

THE RACKET

46



UNTITLED
CORRINE HATT
2019



UNTITLED
CORRINE HATT
2020

POEM 5:
**Scene where I let a white
woman cut my hair and I cry**

MAGDELINE MAHER

As soon as I walk into my usual haunt and I realize Catherine has vanilla cake skin and angel hair locks, I know I'm fucked.

*

I remove my leather jacket, a fucking sweaty mess, debating whether I should take an L on my deposit and hedge my bets on my kitchen scissor skills in front of my bathroom mirror before she chops and my ebony curls tumble to the ground and I swear to the kinky haired goddesses in hell that I'll never let a white person touch my hair in any context ever again and in those moments, I'm thankful to 570k dead Americans for helping trigger the mask mandate so she can't attempt to read my expressions of appall and through gritted teeth like an idiot like a woman taught to never express dismay I say "I love it" and in the "after" photos the parts of my face not concealed by black mask are sienna.

*

During lockdown I grew increasingly unable to look myself in the mirror and I went from years of never wearing makeup to doing my brows more religiously than brushing my teeth and at 23 I developed the anti-aging regimen of getting blackout drunk every 6 months then panicking about my inevitable mortality then tempering that panic by purchasing a Groupon for Botox and I get consultations for a nose job and lip filler lest my reflection shatter and at the end, I somehow like myself even less.

*

I think being a woman can be summarized by the scene where I spend the morning vomiting up a red wine/riced cauliflower/sriracha blend then apply a BHA mask and walk it off.

*

In important meetings I try to pull my hair back but it makes my scalp throb so if I'm in them too long I eventually let the curls free. One day I had consecutive meetings with a senior researcher who made a shocked face then said "Whoa! You look so different" like before-and-after Medusa PowerPoint slides and I explained to her and she lamented: "Well that's not right! Your natural hair isn't unprofessional and people shouldn't make comments" and I nod in agreement.

*

After my haircut my scalp throbs for months.



VIRTUAL REALITY B
LIAN NG
2020



VIRTUAL REALITY A
LIAN NG
2020

Last Days on the Cul-de-Sac

REBECCA PATRASCU

When the end times come you are otherwise occupied,
pulling up Bermuda grass, one rhizome-clump at a time.
Until the sun disappears behind a black gaiter

and you grope your way inside under noon stars,
turn on the lights, check your news apps. Doomsdayers
are trending, with insider knowledge and forecasts.

They're mostly talking sevens: seals (though
not pinnipeds), a seven-headed dragon, seven-
horned angelic brass band, seven-horned lamb

with seven eyes, which seems odd to you.
Surely fourteen would be better? It's all bloody
moons and repent-ye's and some bear-leopard-lion

thing, a genetic trial gone wrong. So bleak
it's past credibility in spite of how cold it is
with the sun playing hide-&-seek. But you like

how savvy commentators, hyped on the drama,
ask "but do you actually think..." with eyebrows
raised. Urbane, ironic. So how bad can it be?

The sun soon comes out of its cave, after all,
and the stock market ticks back up a bit.
But two nights later a ruddy moon rises,



ASCEND
ANGELICA TRIMBLE-YANU
2020

tinting the streets ruby, like streaks of light
through Chagall's window in Chichester,
or a pitcher of Hawaiian punch.

The next morning, early, the locusts come.
They strip the yard of the weeds you missed
and all the other plants. Permaculture be damned.

The sound they make is like oil sizzling in a skillet,
so you pan-fry a veggie burger as a distraction,
try to find a Bible site that isn't overloaded,

try to remember the Sunday School lessons
you went to when you were six, can recall
only crayons and a cartoon good Samaritan.

They don't crack open the fever dream
of Revelations for pre-adolescents, you realize.
But there's hot debate online over the right

order of things. The chronology foretold
seems skewed. In this way, conclusion
surprises everyone. Maybe there's still time

to organize your linens, you think, secure
at least in your ability to fold a fitted sheet.
You fill your pots with water from the sink

before it dries up, wonder what wormwood is,
remember Bergman and Charlton Heston,
that currently unhoused man on the street

telling you to repent. When was the last time
you called your parents? Then you remember
how needy they are. Then you remember

they died, years ago. Which goes to show
how rattled all this has made you. The death
of your cell phone and internet is next. Outside,



YOU LOOK TO SEE WHAT THE LIGHT LETS IN
ANGELICA TRIMBLE-YANU
2019

locust husks everywhere. Your neighbors'
shades are drawn. Maybe they're out of town.
You didn't notice when they left.



YOU LOOK TO SEE WHAT THE LIGHT LET'S IN
ANGELICA TRIMBLE-YANU
2021

The Landmine (A Love Story)

- for M.E.T.

J.G. STEEN

It could have happened anywhere, in the jungles of Southeast Asia or the sandy dunes of the Syrian Desert. I had gone exploring in a classified location, looking for hidden treasure in a place I didn't belong. I stepped where I shouldn't have stepped and was blown to pieces. When they found me, they did everything they could to put me back together, stitching a bit of me here and another piece there. I finally came to in a bright room that smelled of antiseptic. Doctors leaned over me, nodding in approval.

They said everything had gone smoothly but there was a slight complication. Another person had been at the blast site. She had also been blown apart. There was rumor going around that she worked with a nonprofit organization deployed in the classified area. They were dismantling unexploded ordnance left behind by the American military. When she was found there were pieces of her scattered all over the place. "It seems," said one of the doctors, "that we may have mixed up some of her pieces and your pieces. It's Ed's fault. He was in charge of labeling the pieces."

I didn't blame Ed but I did feel different. There was something missing, a hole in me that wasn't there before. When they released me from the hospital, I booked a hotel and decided to stick around and look for this woman. When I asked if they knew how to find her, the doctor sighed. Apparently, he told me, Ed had also neglected to take down her name. I was starting to dislike Ed.

There was a large open-air market near my hotel. I was living off an envelope of traveler's cheques I had stolen from a family of tourists. I was ashamed of

this. At night, I thought about the woman and her humanitarian efforts. I made a vow to be a better person. But for now, what was I to do? The surgery had depleted my funds and I had to find her. Whenever I pulled one of the cheques from its envelope, I noticed that the third and fourth fingers on my right hand were—unlike my furry sausages—slender and delicate. They must be hers.

I went to the market most days for fresh oranges and sweet coffee from a stand operated by a gregarious blind man that was always eager for conversation. He had a pet monkey. I liked this monkey.

It was there that I saw her. She limped the way that I limped only it was her left leg instead of her right. She had scars and stitches much like mine. They crisscrossed her body, peeking out from below the hem of her skirt, and the sleeves of her blouse. I approached her, my heart beating out a foreign rhythm as I asked myself: Whose heart is this inside my chest? Where has it been and where is it going? I reached out, fingers almost touching her shoulder, and wondered what it would be like to be made whole.



VIRTUAL REALITY C
LIAN NG
2020



VIRTUAL REALITY D
LIAN NG
2020

Ken Poem

GRACE DILGER

The flutter in our swamp apartment isn't our saccharine hearts but the spun sugar wings of roaches who gain flight in heat.

We wake up to calls. We wake up to knocks.

I told you I'd be here early. No you didn't, you just said tomorrow.

Ken's head is in our cold oven and he's dripping. It hasn't worked right in months. Lighting when it wants to—a fickle leading man. The bare feet of men are something I find touching. But I think my lagoon toes up my Brillo shins past sex bruises and lesions of note, to the shorts I couldn't have worn to grade school are a rest stop of intimacy my landlord wouldn't piss at if it were the last rest stop for a thousand miles.

Pandemics made you lazy, huh? It's nine. We were up fucking. This tee shirt is the one I asked for when he tossed his cum rag briefs in the hamper.

This sandy glaze of a face is that of a woman who came to sleep. It's nine, I say. I ask Ken if he drinks iced coffee. He doesn't drink coffee at all, but tea, not chamomile, he had to stop. It makes older folks too calm and they forget things.

I ask if he's ever smelt chamomile flowers. He hasn't. I don't want to hover disrespectfully. To think I wouldn't leave him alone. This is the only time I've seen his mask below his nose,

responsible guy, five daughters, you know.

I've only met the one when she swept the carpeted hallway stairwell. I was glad it was Christmas so I could rush by with my bags. Hi, how are you? Good good,

thanks. Happy Holidays!

Ken doesn't think I've done a good job. He says, when I clean my oven I actually clean my oven. I'm insulted.

He leaves to buy parts, back in an hour.

I change into maroon, ribbed leggings and a racerback bra that makes Alcatraz of my shoulders.

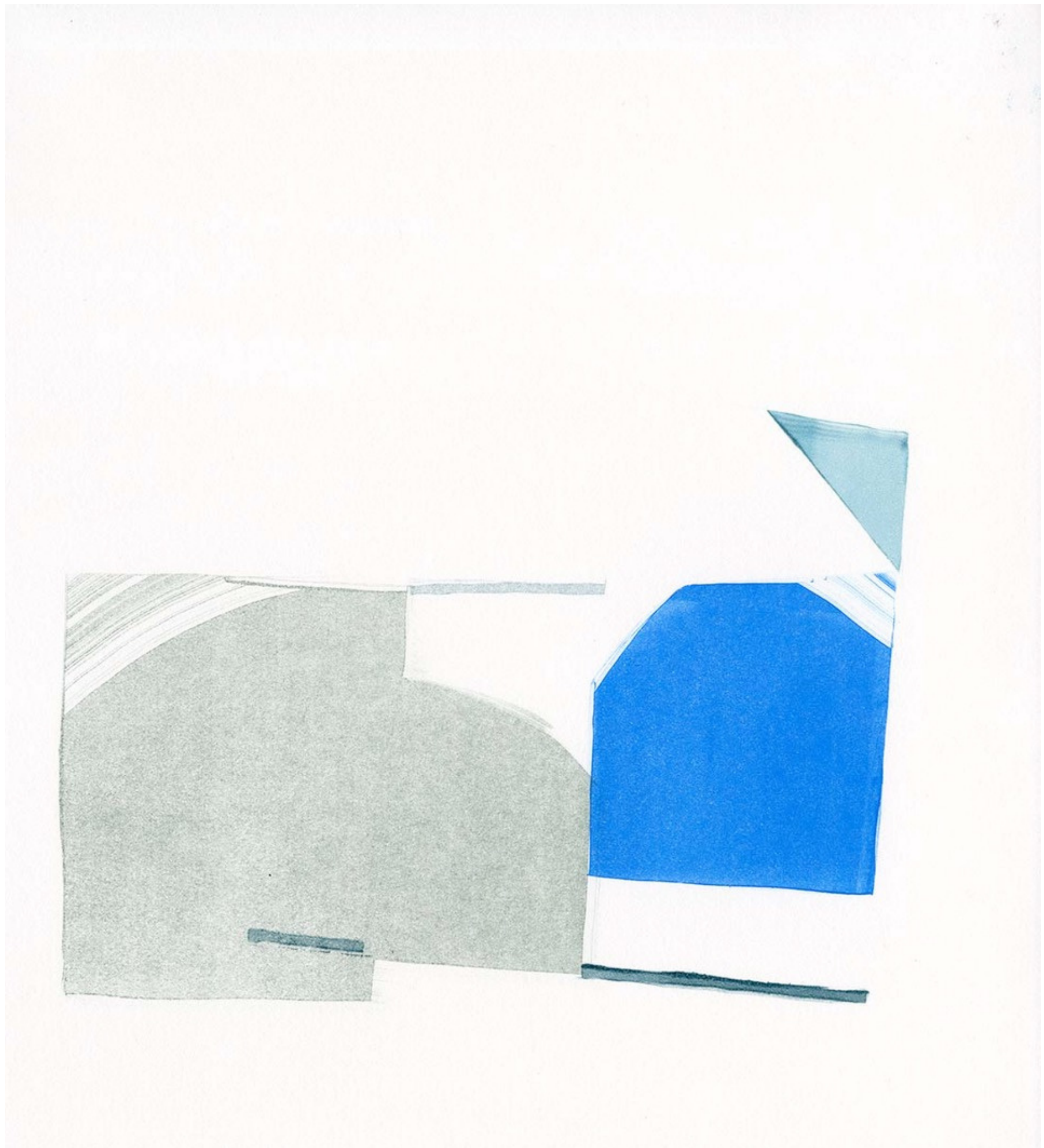
I won't work out for hours.

I have to write this poem.

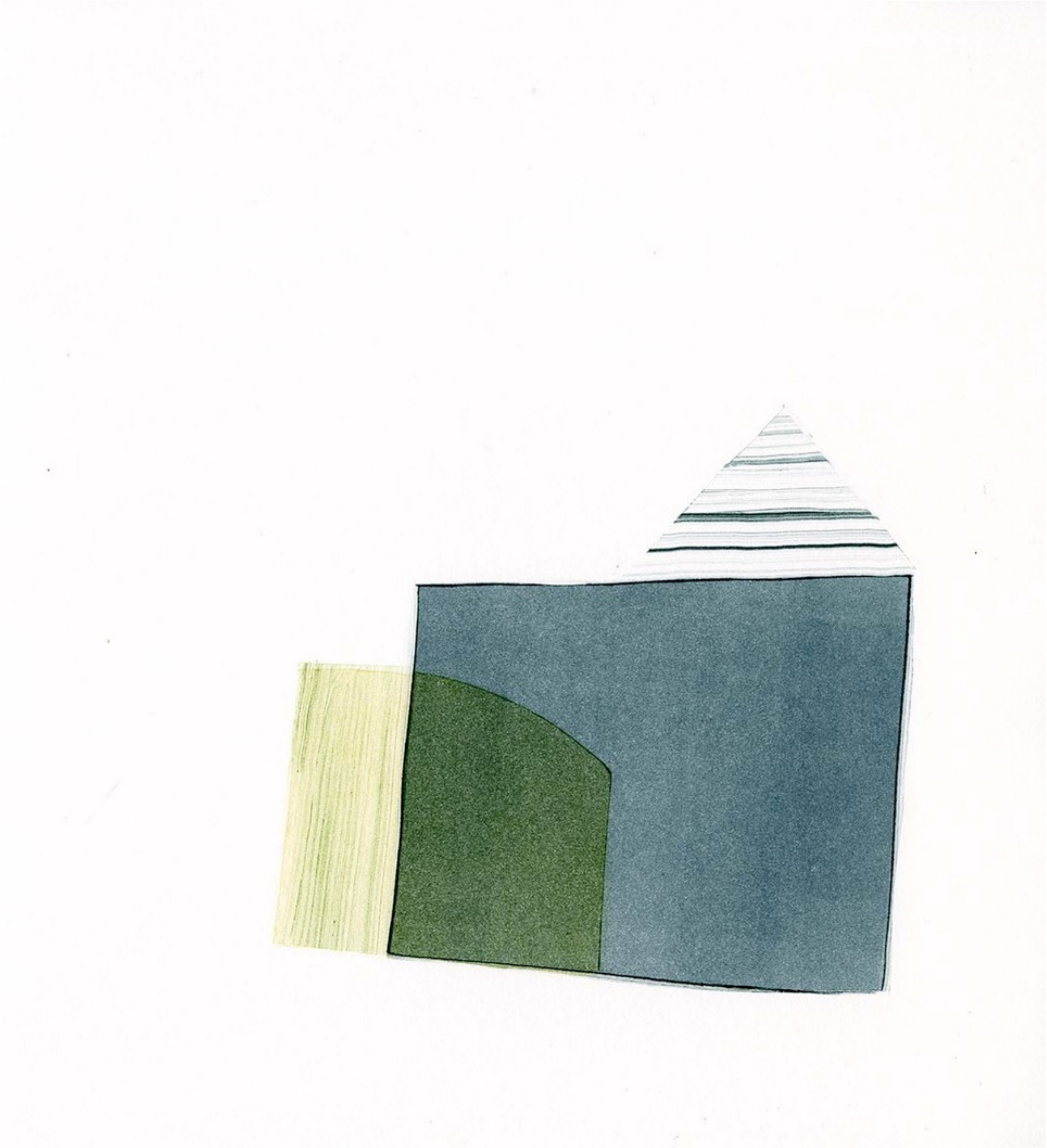
I cotton round the stadium whitehead off my nose bridge.

Comb my hair. Brush the cold brew off my incisors. Roll ylang-ylang and tea tree on my middle ear. Thinking, talk down to this body. Have a look at this.

Can you fix the oven with a mouth full of my bread? The way this spandex clings to me I want you to remember—the way I loop my scrunchie round the rice to ward off staling.



UNTITLED
CORRINE HATT
2021



UNTITLED
CORRINE HATT
2019

**THE
BACK
PAGE**

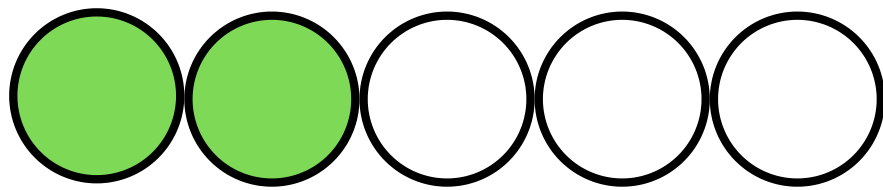
BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

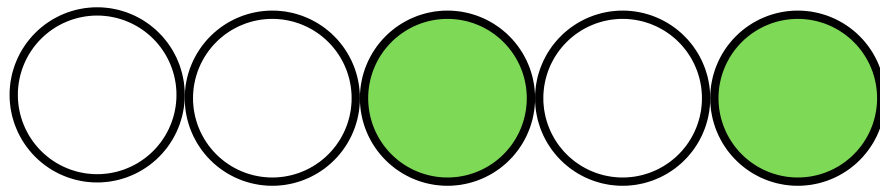
WORD STUFF

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

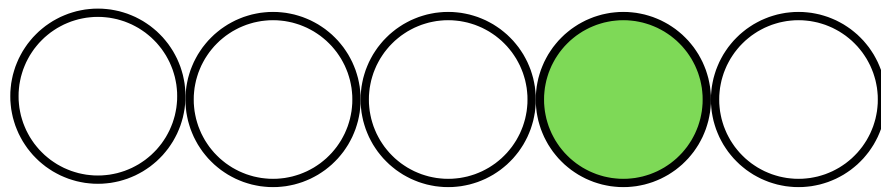
GEIHW



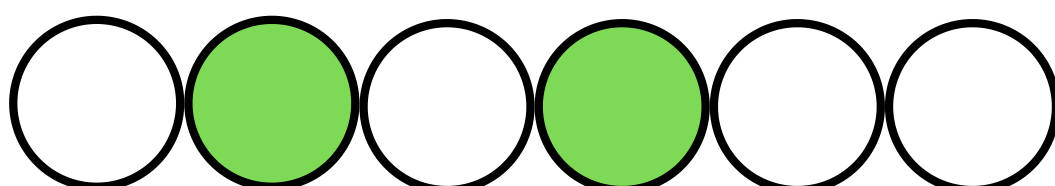
DUEES



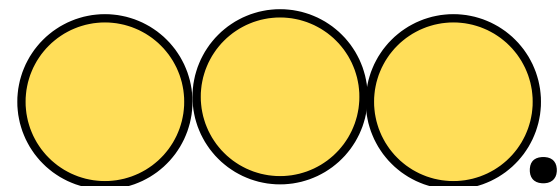
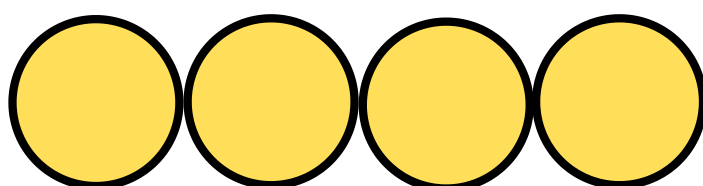
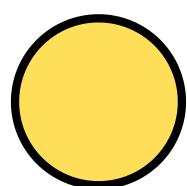
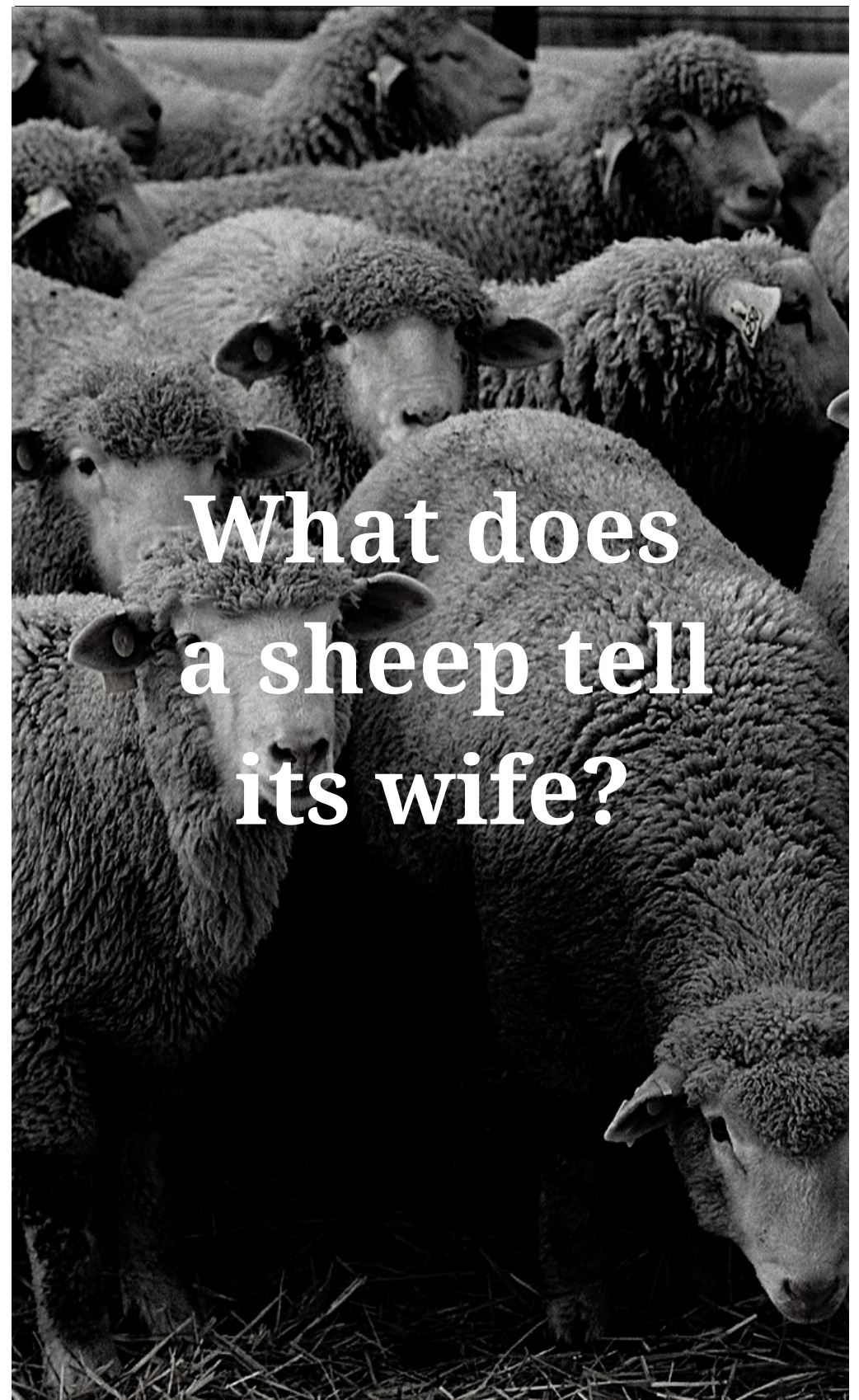
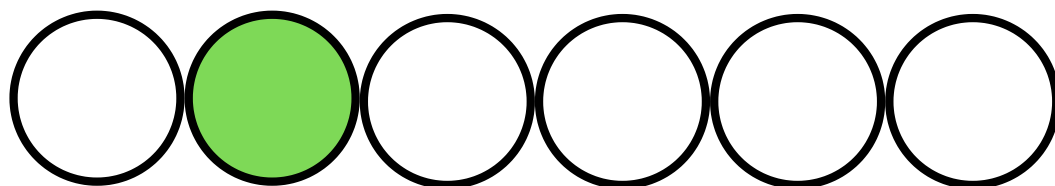
LVHEA



RLADOL



ILEPRP



(Answers next week.)

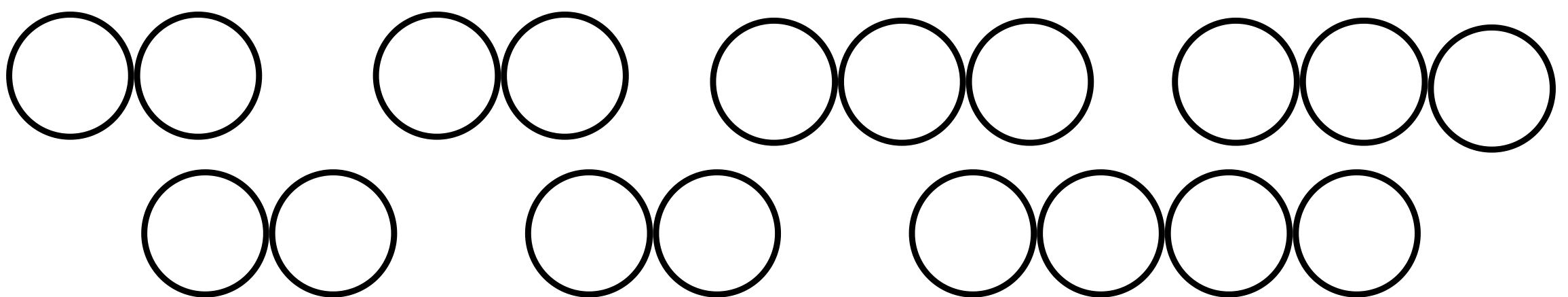
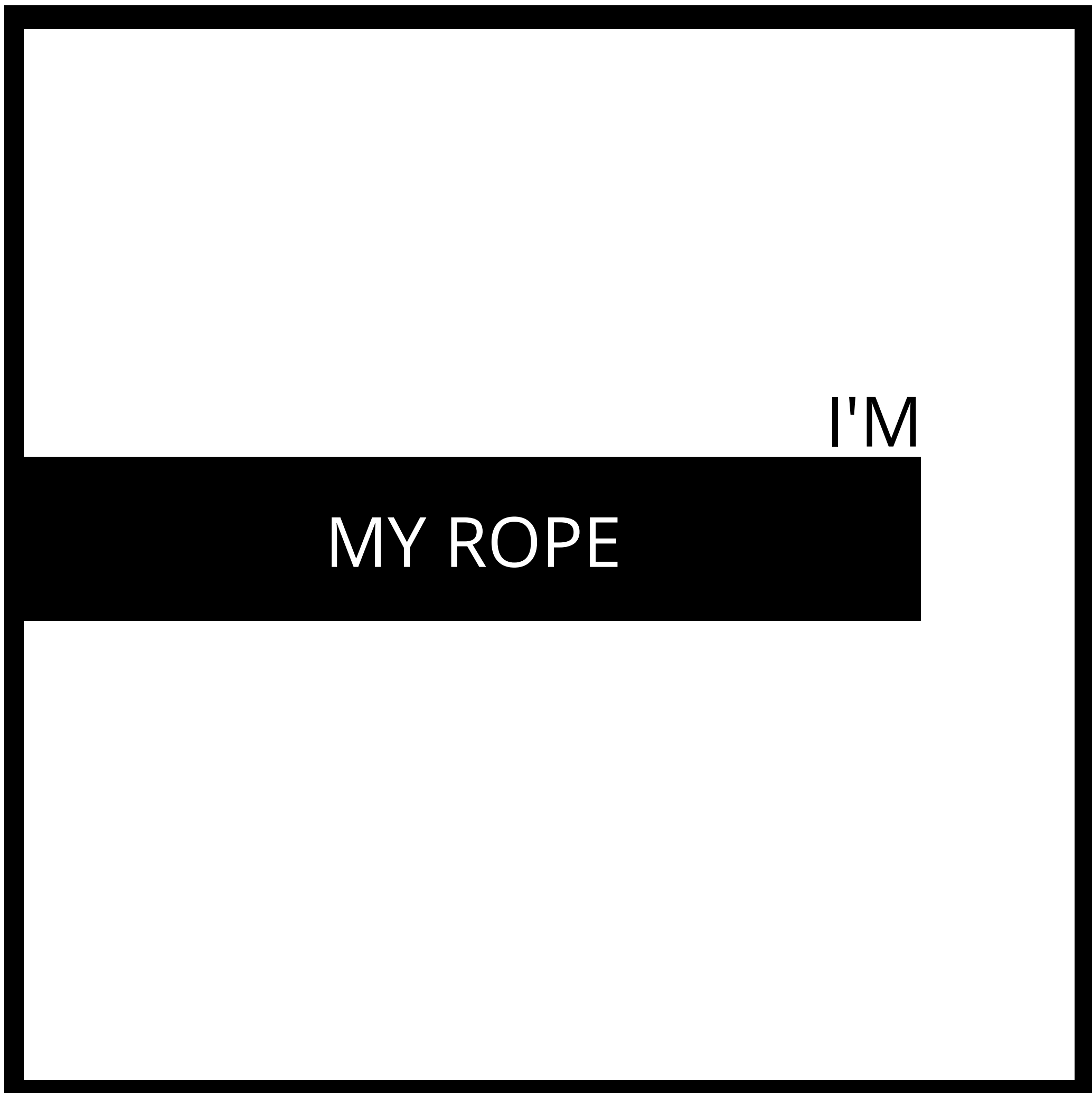
Last week's answers:

CARGO, MISUSE, HYBRID, VACANT, INFANT

What do you call a factory that makes decent products? *Satisfactory.*

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

cutting corners

CONTRIBUTORS

GRACE DILGER
CORRINE HATT
MAGDELINE MAHER
LIAN NG
REBECCA PATRASCU
J.G. STEEN
ANGELICA TRIMBLE-YANU
VINCENT VALDEZ

THE RACKET

PATREON

[WWW.PATREON.COM/
THERACKETREADINGSERIES](http://WWW.PATREON.COM/THERACKETREADINGSERIES)

WEBSITE

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

NEWSLETTER

[WWW.THERACKETSF.COM/
NEWSLETTER](http://WWW.THERACKETSF.COM/NEWSLETTER)

INSTAGRAM

[@THERACKETREADINGSERIES](https://www.instagram.com/THERACKETREADINGSERIES)

SUBMIT YOUR WORK:

<https://theracketsf.com/submissions>

**TAKING A BREAK.
BE BACK
IN A BIT.**

