

THE RACKET

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Hey there.

It is just about the end of the year and as much as this is one of my favorite times of the year (Holidays! End of year lists! An overarching sense of societally approved laziness!) it is also a time to take a birds eye view of the year coming to a close behind us. To look out over the dwindling frontier in our rearview and make large scale assumptions about what it means and how we can do better.

This hasn't ever been easy for anyone, but in the midst of these last few chaotic spins around the globe, trying to make sense of it all—let alone resolve to do something better—has been a challenge. What can we possibly say or do in the face of everything that's happening in the world, in our country, in our cities and towns, in the simple routines of our daily existences that might actually make anything better?

It feels as if the "quitting smoking" type of end of year resolution just doesn't cut it in the face of a steadily warming planet, war and every other concrete roadblock we seem to be nose-diving into as a society these days.

But, in a rare burst of optimism, I beg to differ.

We are surrounded by and immersed in hardship—our own and others—these days. Our newspapers and televisions and social media accounts vacillate between abject horror and teeth-grinding positivity as society tries to find some footing in a time when nothing seems to be in anyone's control. There's a nausea inducing spin to existence right now and it feels impossible to slow it down.

We are pinned to a merry-go-round by global events, hurtling around and around with nothing to do but try not to be sick.

I say this: let the great world spin and find joy (or even forward momentum) in the smallest of solaces. Instead of focusing on the slow crumble of the world and how regardless of what we do nothing seems to change, look to your immediate surroundings—your family, your friends, your coworkers, your pet, your beloved daily routine, the arrival of the newspaper, a sandwich from the corner store, a single line of a poem, a single note from a song, your partner's lips on your neck, a clean house, an unclean house, a quiet walk in a graveyard, a moment of silence in a messy day. Stop staring at the sky and waiting for it to fall and start appreciating the experience playing out around you.

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There's hope to be found in realizing that on a large scale we very well might be fucked, but in the moments of our day-to-day lives we're still living, breathing, maybe even thriving.

And with that, we'll see you in 2023.

Thanks for being along for the ride this year.

-N

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

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We were kind of right about the sex stuff.



WE HAVE A PATREON

We aren't in this for the money.

But 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.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

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DESERT FIFTHS, 4
CYBELE LYLE
2020



DESERT FIFTHS, 2
CYBELE LYLE
2020

Nostalgia and its Gravity

CARSON PYTELL & ZEBULON HUSET

Beguiled by a current of bats
flushed from the underpass,

kids will fish them up with stone,
else risk risking to get pantsed.

A fluid line of ants spun from
the latest of car-killed cats,

always skinny, and the sun was not
there. Our parents whistled us in

like steam engines low on coal,
the day's fibers rubbing them raw

as the burgers we'd eat, as flesh
always ends, but tougher than us.



DESERT SCREENS DAY
CYBELE LYLE
2020

Snow

MARISA LIN

Crab legs. They are eating crab legs for dinner. Stiff, boiled limbs cracked open to reveal snowy insides soft and yielding. Her mother snaps a leg in half, hands her a tuft of meat. “Eat.” And she lets the flesh sit on her tongue, juice melting like an otter into water, slipping down her throat. Inside, she too felt a shell’s weight. Her mouth where stuff went in, not out. Senior year, a boy forced his tongue on hers, and even then he couldn’t take it back. Like a spike strip on a road, the threshold of her jaw could only be crossed in one direction, unharmed.

Occasionally, she wondered how it would feel to be split open, to bare her insides to other minds, their probing tentacles. Would she dissolve? Perhaps the phrases she had been storing for her mother, father and whitefriends would cascade out, humiliations flying in lawless vectors. But speculation was useless. Whether fossilized from birth or baked by Minnesota sun, the carapace contained well its contents—sodden tissues, abandoned notebooks, photos of dogs up for adoption—girlhood’s excesses trimmed and tucked behind a wall beyond which no parent or whitefriend could pry ajar.

For survival involved the doubling of self. Mitosis for immigrants. First, it was Daughter. Then PerfectStudent. QuietGirl. GoodFriend. AsianKid. Over time, these identities began to act of their own accords, personas mingling, mixing, and multiplying like stray cats in a neighborhood. Soon, it was hard to tell whether GoodFriend’s pride was Daughter’s shame or if QuietGirl’s anger was PerfectStudent’s anxiety deformed. When she called AsianKid, PerfectStudent responded. When it was Daughter’s turn, QuietGirl crept on stage. And, she thought, none were dazzling. Not one would catch a whiteboy’s fancy, astonish him with her radiance. The closest she got was from a nurse old enough to be her mom: “Double lids, so pretty.”

—as if beauty was what covered her up. Her eyes, once portals to planets, now two black dimes flattened by the world’s indifference. Barriers, not gateways. What burned within, stayed within—the shell made sure of that. Her architect seemed to have fastened the

bolts tight. But—and this was QuietGirl’s but—perhaps somewhere they had installed a hinge, a knob. Something that turned, an opening to confirm her suspicion that under her exoskeleton was something soft and pulsing. Maybe a flower singing below. She didn’t need much, just a crack. Wide enough to see the snow—

*A flake’s crescendo
For independence twisting
Tongues toward bitter truths*



ALLEGORY OF BIRTH
MATTEA PERROTTA
2022



ALLEGORY OF PURGATORY
MATTEA PERROTTA
2022

No one remembers your face, let alone your name.

GEORGE BRIGGS

Infinites are fields that turn into woods and go on rolling. Maybe it's the other way around. Covering meager spaces that got carved away. Little barren spots. Shoulders, roadsides they fall away. The ends of the road record a delicate erosion. One foot at a time. They aren't as safe as sidewalks but who would pay for sidewalks around here, with so few walking in the first place? We walked there. We walk here. There are footsteps below the telephone lines. The ends of the road record a delicate erosion. One foot at a time. Some better storyteller might speak of the magic or dangerous woods the fields where souls meet souls meet spirits. Or the way that growing up means turning into a tree. Rooting in and seeking loftier things. Or leaving.

Not everything is paved. Only the roads that take us real places. Places with names. The single k-12 school or the miniscule post office. The underattended churches with their signs for bean suppers and bingo nights. The town hall, maybe. The gas station that has all that you might need for the weekend - beer or wine that we'll keep chilled on the back porch, cigs or juuls or dip, chips, warm hats and mittens, and alka seltzer for Monday morning. along with jumper cables and Uncle Henry's Swap & Sell It Guide and that picture of the middle school championship basketball team from 1998. Candy and work gloves and pickles in a jar. But nothing to save you or anyone else. Can't get naloxone there, you'd have to drive to CVS and that's a good 20 minutes away and back and by then, well.

Well.

If you go far enough, things get steeper. A gradual slope turns you to stone. A monument to slow erosion. To the freezing and thawing of time. A mountain who stands and waits. There are always the mountains. The sea is a different story. You cannot step into the sea without knowing change. And this place never changes. So it must be a mountain. It must be the end. Maybe everything is an end, or maybe there are no ends at all. Only the mountains and the woods and the roads that lead you home if you want them to.



MAN CONFRONTS SHADOW, WEDNESDAY
IAN GROSE
2002

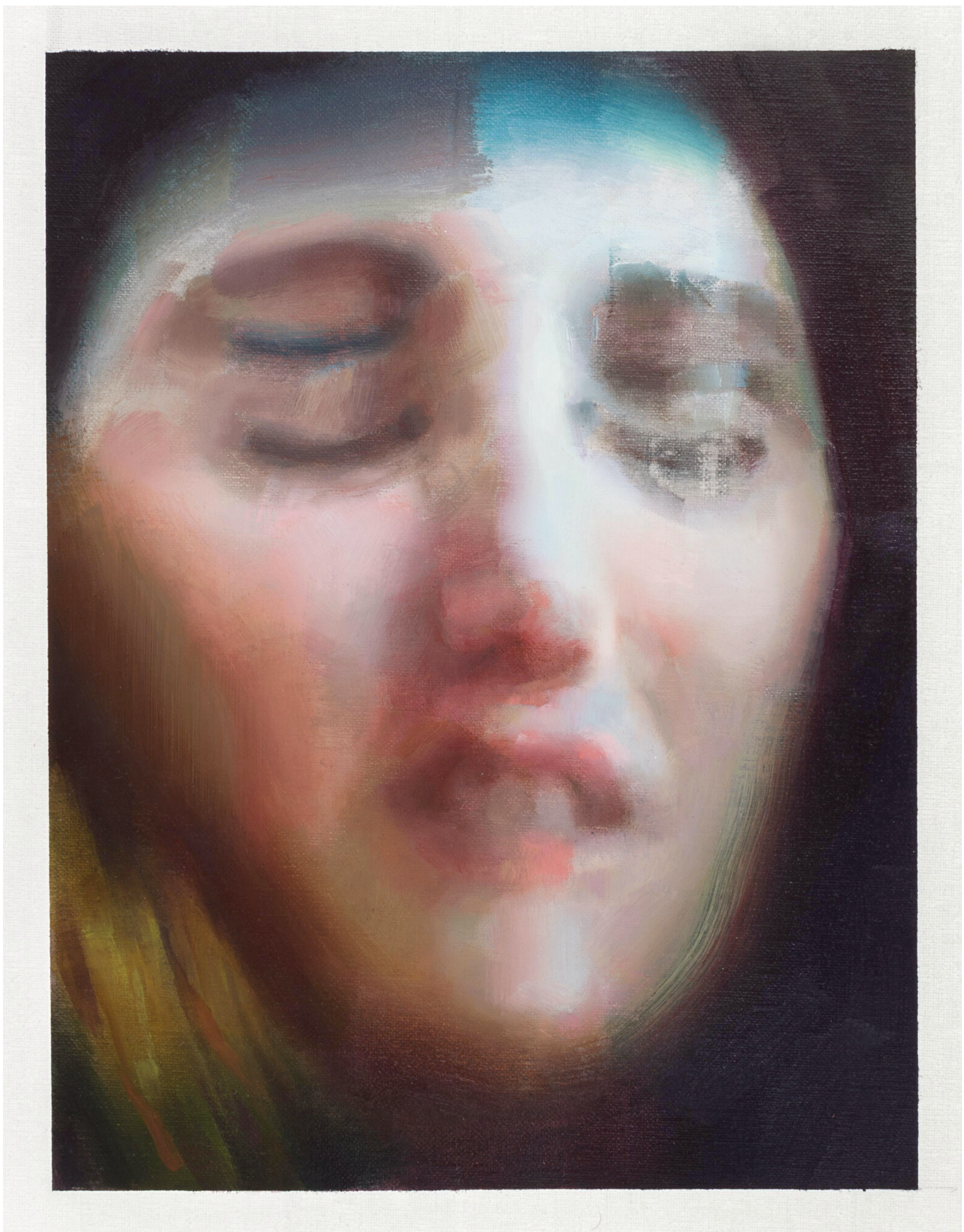
Being Screamed at in the Grocery Store Parking Lot

AMY MIDDLETON

The sun is heavy at 5pm. It hangs low in the sky, taunting us with night. Here, I am told, once again, I am not good enough. My grandma laughs, as if it's a joke. But the sky is pink- She shimmers in the distance, just behind the cars. I am not good enough and I never have been. Tomorrow waits hopefully. The promise of another chance is too enticing. On the drive home I will count every blue house we pass. I don't think they love me anymore. Driving through my hometown is as boring as ever. The doll houses on every street have never been so beautiful. Golden hour in the suburbs only exists inside Barbie Doll commercials and Hallmark movies. I can smell the heat when it turns on. All the leftover dust from last year, suddenly here again. Sleeping in my brother's old bed means I always have his dreams. I wonder if she'll ever forgive me. The bugs watch over me all night, and leave me love notes on the windowsill every morning.



LUCE
IAN GROSE
2022



FOUR EYES (PORNO)
IAN GROSE
2022

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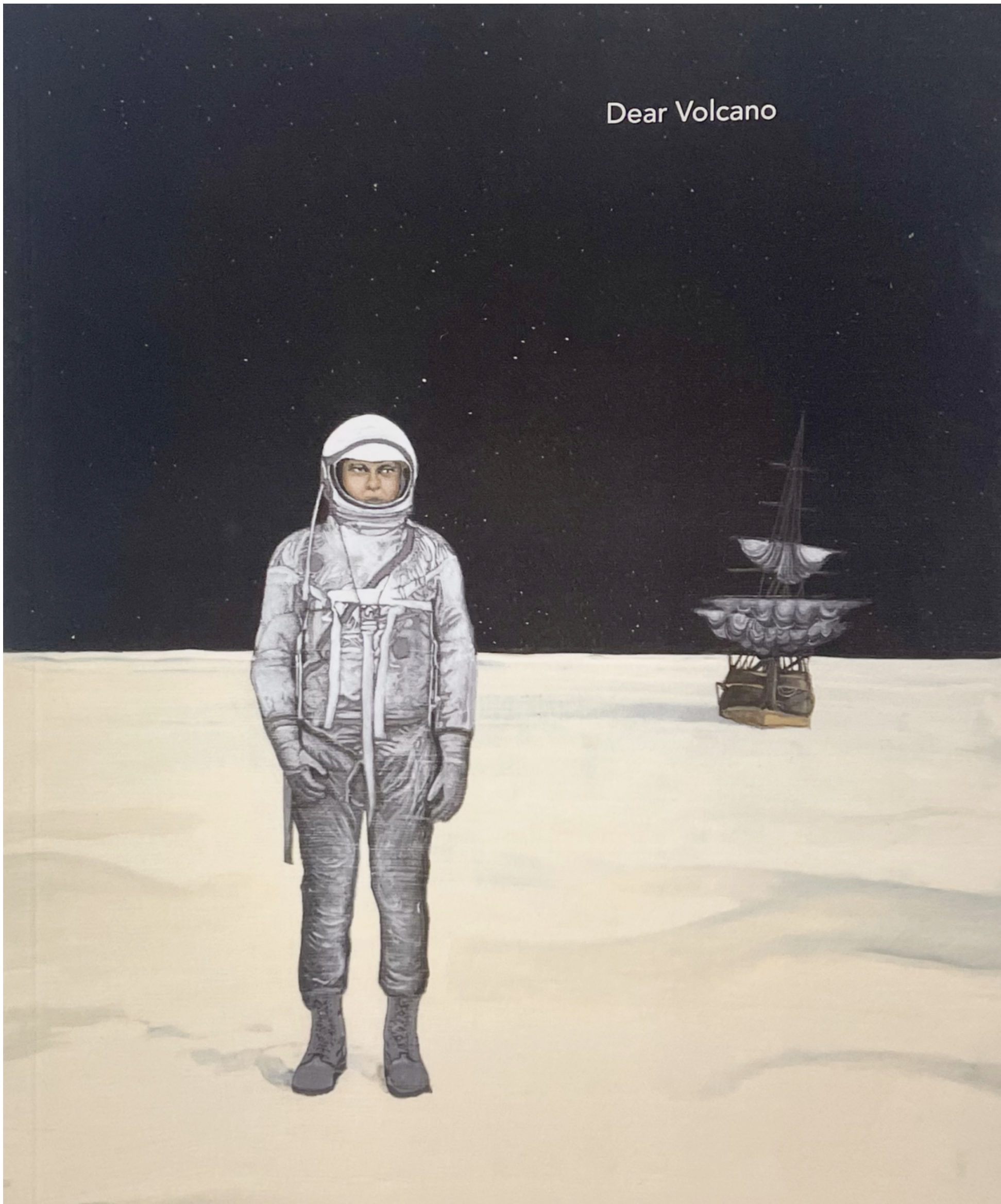
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DEAR VOLCANO

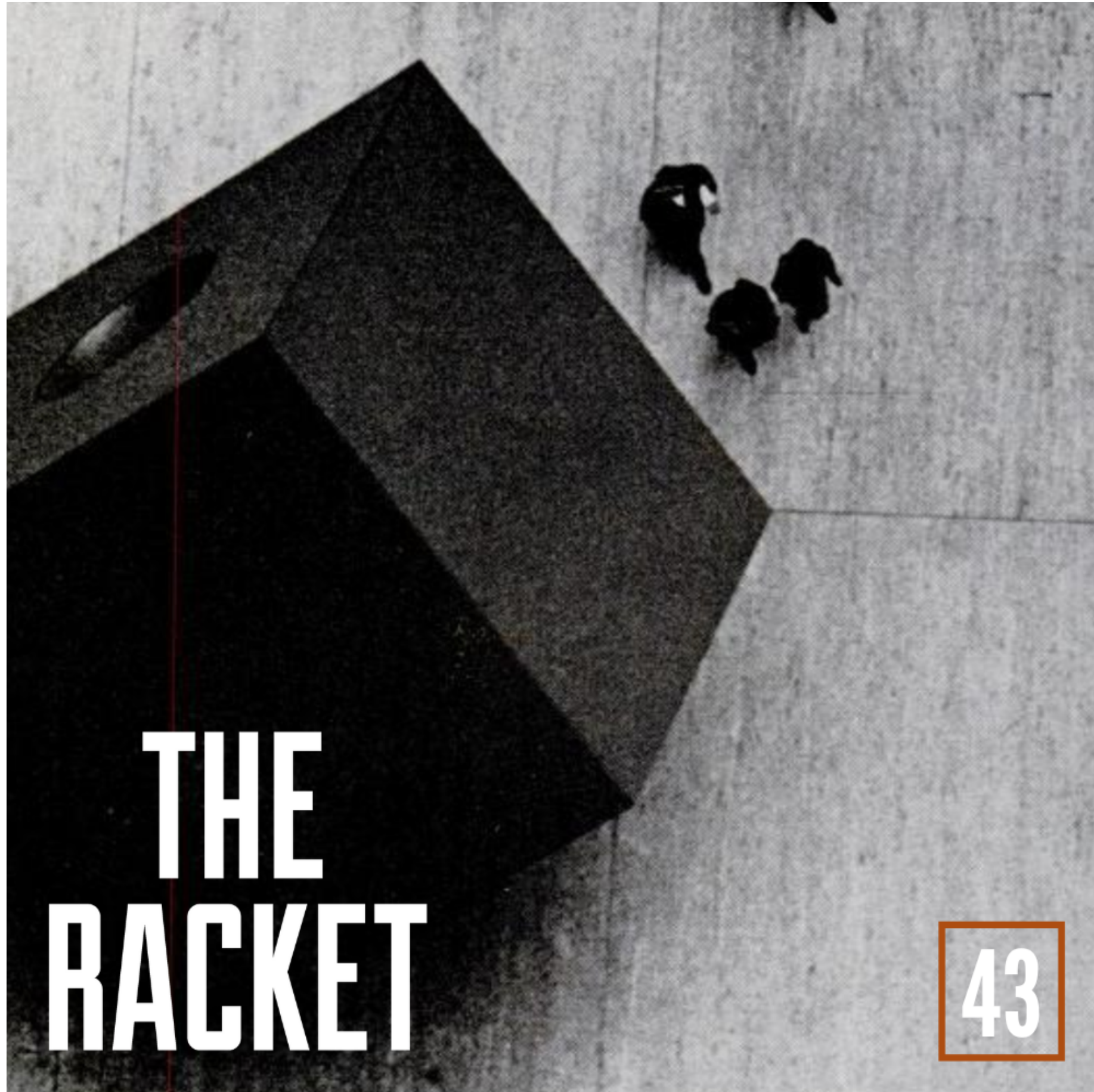
POEMS FROM CREATIVE GROWTH ART CENTER



The result of Creative Growth's first poetry program, Dear Volcano features poems collectively composed by Creative Growth artists during 2020-2022. Poems featured in the book are ekphrastic reactions to artwork from the Creative Growth Art Studio.

GET YOUR COPY.

PLAYLIST 42:
SADNESS LOOPS



Men I Trust, strongboi, the GOLDEN DREGS,
Oliver Sim, Babe Rainbow
...
and more.

LISTEN TO IT.

**END OF THE
YEAR AS WE
KNOW IT.**

