

TOTEM '14



Table of Contents

| | |
|--|--------|
| "It's time for action!" Annie Mejia | Page 1 |
| The Love Song of the Android Boy Helen Evans | 2 |
| Kannitverstan and the Juniper Tree Vivian Buhler | 3 |
| Burung Merak Shi En Kim Pen | 4 |
| "Perfect Stranger" Anonymous | 5 |
| St Kevin and the Blackbird Vivian Buhler | 7 |
| Anna's Hummingbird Alec Brenner Digital Photography | 8 |
| Rio Tinto Peter Buhler Digital Photography | 9 |
| On the romantic implications of the spleen Nicole Yunger Halpern | 10 |
| sweet licorice Monica He | 11 |
| Charred Giants Alec Brenner Digital Photography | |
| Alcohol Garden Peter Buhler | 12 |
| limited Monica He | 13 |
| No End In Sight Kiara Simpao Digital Photography | 14 |
| Orange Bridge Peter Buhler Digital Photography | 15 |
| Cliffside Peter Buhler | 16 |
| Daughter, Do You Know Your Name? Anonymous | 17 |
| Rowboat Anonymous | 18 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Az 12: Common Mistakes in Megaengineering Youry Aglyamov | 19 |
| Az 13: Quantum Neurology Youry Aglyamov | 20 |
| Think Bigger Peter Buhler | 21 |
| Let it Snow Jenny He Digital Photography | 22 |
| Apocalypse Lost Youry Aglyamov | 23 |
| Storm over the Gulf Alec Brenner Digital Photography | 24 |
| Lunch Alec Brenner Digital Photography | 25 |
| Water Flower Garden Dew Anonymous | 26 |
| Walking on a Blue Dream Eric Liu Digital Photography | 27 |
| Front Cover Art: Florida Sunset Alec Brenner Digital Photography | |
| Back Cover Art: Winter Sky on the Eastern Shore Alec Brenner Digital Photography | |



"It's time for action!" | Annie Mejia | Digital Art

The Love Song of the Android Boy

By Helen Evans

I.
At the close,
when I lie clasped in your
grasping, desperate arms,
consumed by your hunger
to know why
blinking Christmas lights touch you
infinitely more deeply
than a starless night,
I wonder
If

II.
Of course, you'd probably disagree.
And go ahead. Brand me a
Luddite (steam-powered romance
was so three centuries ago). Declare
ours a marriage of
plastic and electricity.
But oh! dearest, though I
grant you that, do not
presume to call yourself
liberated.

Ours is a thoroughly
Victorian affair. Not
proscribed,
yes, but still
prescribed. It is the
cure to all that
ails you. The balm
to your loneliness, the poultice
to your (pathetic excuse for
existentialism) hysteria.

III.
Take me twice
daily—doctor's orders!
Side effects may include
giddiness and
cheek pain.

IV.
Yes,
what if I told you, I
wonder?

V.
I wonder
if you would hate me
if you would screech and
shout and
smash me piecemeal
if you would kick my desiccated
corpse to the curb
if you would trade me
in for the newer
model with fewer
bugs and no
ifs.

VI.
I wonder
if that might not be
for the best.

Might as well be
broken
if I can't fix you.

Kannitverstan and the Juniper Tree

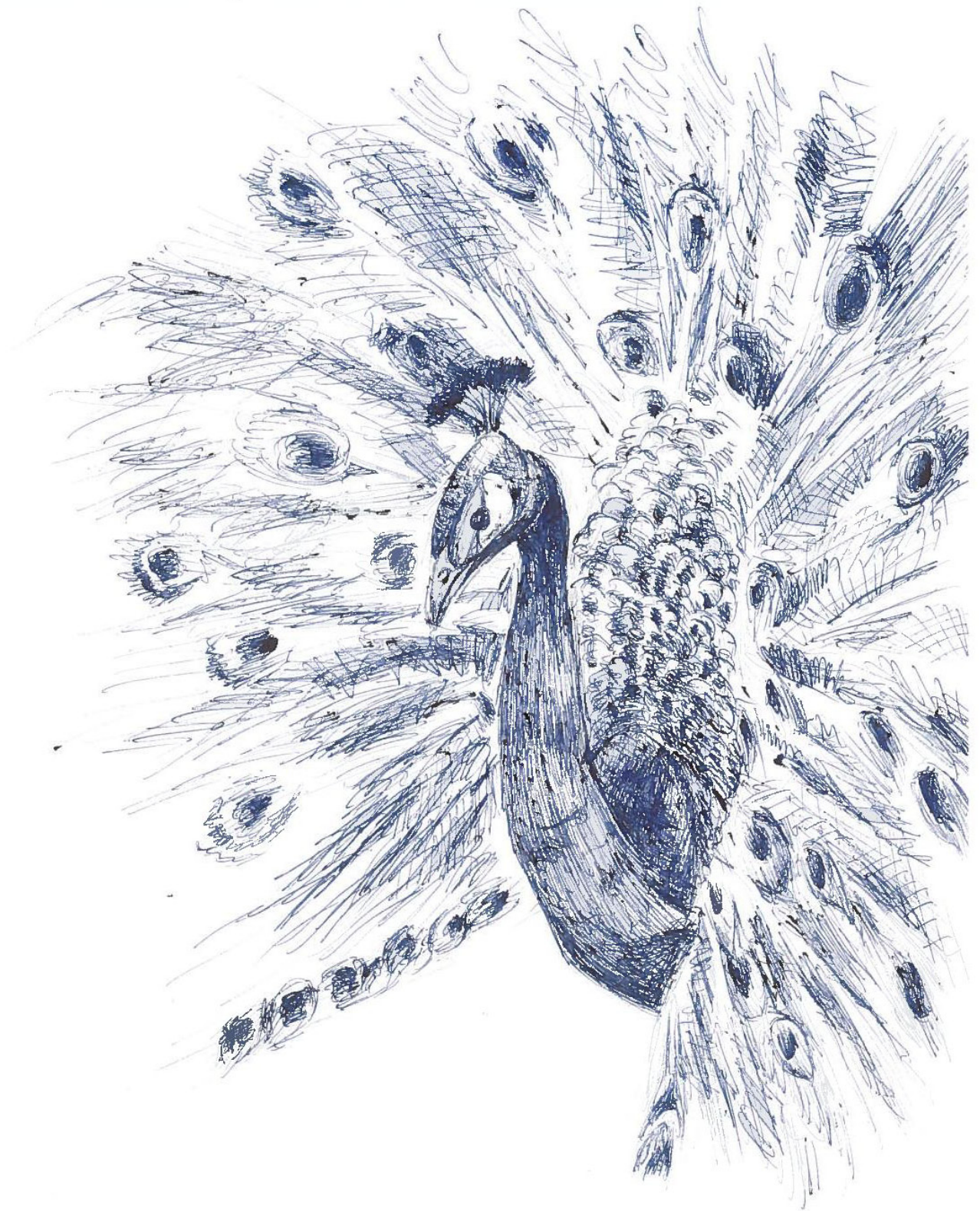
By Vivian Buhler

You are a visitor in this land, a land of many trees, and every one different. Here is a tree standing just out of reach, whose boughs are laden with guava fruit, so heavily laden that the whole tree bends under the weight. That tree is at least five hands around, or so it looks, stronger than your arms and legs put together, to carry all that fruit day in and day out. You would reach out your hand, you would pluck one and lighten its load (though the tree's burden is really none of your business), but for the humming fences on every side. There are no ghosts here, not since the barley farmer with his face black and blue. And here a sparrow sings chirps and tweets, but you (as miserable as you are) are not the man to listen, and you walk on, unheeding; if he asks for food, he stands on more than you could eat (if only it were yours), and if he asks for a golden chain, a pair of red shoes, a millstone, you don't have any of those things, and you know something is wrong with the world (and probably with you as well). Tweet tweet! how lovely is the day, how lovely to be a bird, how lovely this bird I, insists the bird. If there is a bird in your story, a lovely bird who sings with the voice of a boy, you know the end is grim.

You may grieve now, because your hunger is enough cause for pain, but here lives one man to whom belongs all the fruit of the tree, fruit he will probably never eat. There is a treasure chest that belongs to none, to none except, perhaps, Kannitverstan. Here is a man whom nobody ever sees, behind the humming fence and all the trees and who knows what else. If the bird sang to him, he would have the gold chain, and probably the red shoes too (even though he would have no use for red shoes). Kannitverstan might not have the millstone, but the bird could give him that too if he wanted it (and you almost wish that bird would). It would be bad enough to have too little money, too little food, if only everyone else suffered the same. You may remember that you have no great mansion, no ship laden with riches. Kannitverstan has all these; he holds the keys to heaven for all you know.

Crack! and startled, you turn back and see the guava tree bend over and snap, all that fruit is too much for one tree. Crash! and on and around and beneath the broken trunk you see the dying fruit that no one will ever eat, you watch the pale pink juices spill out upon the thirsty ground. Will Kannitverstan now enjoy his guava fruits any more than you ever will? If you have paid any attention, you know he has everything; he has everything right down to his narrow grave.

That bird flies from a juniper tree, and you know the end is grim. So many people in the world are so rich, as rich as Herr Kannitverstan. You are yet young, you have no narrow grave. If you are poor, the earth is wide, and your heart is light.



Shi

24 April 2013

“Perfect Stranger”

Anonymous

I saw you
On a park bench, reading a book
It's a great story, with a happy ending
They fall in love, like you'd expect

I was in a hurry, but that wasn't the reason I was out of breath
It was
Your hair, which I could feel tickling my skin
Your eyes, focused on the words
Your lips, moving silently as you read
Your hands, which were shaped to fit mine
I saw my morning in your smile

You were a perfect stranger
The most perfect stranger I had ever seen

Scientists say that in every breath
I have more molecules of air in my lungs than there are stars in the observable universe
Statistically, I breathe the air of Mother Teresa, Alexander the Great, and Joan of Arc
Maybe we have also shared the same molecules
Our bodies imbued with elements
From the same exploding star
All of space and time coming together
So that we would meet here

I don't believe in love at first sight
But it wasn't first sight
I held you in my arms as we were buried in Pompeii
I covered your grave in flowers as the world was swept with fever
I sat by your bedside as your heart gave out
From love and disease
Your breath stopped all those times
We were never strangers

I stopped to speak to you
You looked up at me
I opened my mouth

And somebody came by and kissed you

You kissed back, and told your lover to wait
I'm not surprised at all
You turned to me
I smiled and said good morning
"Sorry, I thought you were someone I knew"
I breathed in, and breathed out

Then I left, rushing off to my current destination
And my current existence
I know you'll forget about me in a moment
I know I'm just another stranger to you

But if we could meet another time, in another life
I'd like to sit on that park bench
And write our love story for you to read

This time,
With a happy ending.

St Kevin and the Blackbird

By Vivian Buhler

He prayed many hours and waited many days, and she was his answer from heaven. In the moment their paths converged in time and space, his heart was earnest when he asked “‘To labour and not to seek reward,’”—though he knew his flesh was static, impotent rather than patient.

He had confined most of himself and his vision in the narrowness of his cell. But through the small window, he reached for a better work, a truer way to serve. His arm grew stiff from being stretched out all those so many hours. He thought he had been long-suffering all the days he waited, all the days until she came.

As the blackbird landed, surprise arrested his arm. And then curiosity—she was strangely heavy for such a small creature of feather and hollow bone. Perhaps he already recognized her as his prayer’s answer. Was he disappointed in the seeming smallness of his labour? He could have shifted slightly then, and the blackbird would have found some other place to rest. But as long as she stayed, she affirmed the strength and stability of his arm. He watched her lay—her life and progeny lay in his hand.

When he asked to labour, perhaps he thought to serve fellow men in active works of his hands. Perhaps he asked for humility, to not crave recognition in reward. He waited for an answer, and his answer came. And then he waited—as she settled down to nest, as she brooded, as her young hatched one by one.

She did not acknowledge him—she was never conscious of his sacrifice. While she built her home, her family, her life, he did all he could do, and all he could do was—nothing. Pricks of pain grew to numbness as he stilled himself. His fingers lost sensation, and then volition; she lent significance to his torpid body.

Cycles of sun and rain marked the weeks of their codependence, until all her young were fledged and flown. And then she flew, too, no longer needing even so loving a nest. He felt no pain when she moved on; he had grown self-forgetful and patient as a tree. Did he pray, “‘To labour and not to seek reward’”?

She was his answer from heaven, though she was never his.



Anna's Hummingbird | Alec Brenner | Digital Photography



Rio Tinto | Peter Buhler | Digital Photography

On the romantic implications of the spleen

By Nicole Yunger Halpern

I pledge my heart to you, my love,
and lips and eyes and teeth.
Why not append, for thoroughness,
the organs underneath?
My pancreas and clavicle
and spleen are yours to claim.
My liver, lover, longs for you;
for you, my kidneys flame.
Forgive me, though, if I retract
the offer of my heart.
You'll find me never sanguine, should
the bloody pump depart.
To you, my jaw I dedicate
and offer all I bleed
(at least, a pint). Take tibias,
but spare the heart I need.
Don't mourn the muscle, sweetheart mine!
Forget the guts and gore.
Take comfort in my CT scans:
My limbic system's yours.

sweet liquorice

By Monica He

I want
things, and not to want things
as an aesthetic ascetic would not
and not to think of things that young
naive
girls should not think of and yet it always does
come back, that is
the thoughts crowded here, there
traipsing through wooded lawns and the terraces of
lust



Charred Giants | Alec Brenner | Digital Photography

Alcohol Garden

By Peter Buhler

Birdbaths filled with vodka
Martinis grow like weeds
Sparrows make imperfect circles
Squirrels stumble through the trees

Cognacs weep from willows
Long icy shoots of Island teas
Rustle with the cattails,
Lily beers drift in the breeze

In a pond of rum
With Coke pond scum
Float the geese of Friday quittin' time
Red nosed chipmunks play
In the wild Chardonnay
Among flowers made of cheese

But I would rather stroll with you
Through real world fields
To see the sky with cloudless eyes
Smelling flowers made to sneeze

Leave the winding paths of Alcohol Garden
And walk with greater ease

limited

By Monica He

walk me through what you're thinking—
and if it's that there's no point to this, anyways,
you gotta let me know.
don't leave me hanging,
holding on,
just because you like the intimacy
and don't want to give it up.

be more impulsive, go with your gut.
it's probably right,
because you're probably right both ways,
and wrong,
wrong both ways too—
but no worries, that's just life.
it's not fair—
no one ever said it was—
so I don't even know why
that's the thing we're stuck on,
the unfairness and
injustice of it all.
help me out here.



No End In Sight | Kiara Simpao | Digital Photography



Orange Bridge | Peter Buhler | Digital Photography

Cliffside

By Peter Buhler

In the clearing you will find me
In the cradle of the trees
Sung the lullaby of wilderness,
Rocked by the hands of the Fundy

In the clearing you will find me
Frolicking and free
Follow the clear water brook,
To the cottage by the sea

Come here into the summertime
Come here along with me
Bathe softly in the pink of dusk
Here at the cottage by the sea

Wander in across the tide
At the Cliffside I will be
Breathing in the cool salt air
With the cottage by the sea

Come quickly to the meadow
Share a glass of life with me
Here I will be waiting
In the cottage by the sea

And when I am done with being old
When they set me to rest peacefully
Come back and be with me again
Here, in the cottage by the sea

Daughter, Do You Know Your Name?

Anonymous

Daughter, do you know your name?
Your name is sorrow

It is a wonder he forgives me
It is a wonder I am here
It is a wonder that he loves me
It is a wonder in a tear

Daughter, you are blood on the midwife
Daughter, you are death

I remember the dim days
I remember the dim songs
I remember the dim lamps
Full of dim, dim years

Daughter, you are twin helices in everlasting embrace
My daughter, you are my wildest fear

He would hold me in the darkest watch of night
He would hold my little head upon his shoulder
He would hold me, gently, gently rocking
Dripping warm, wet, forever time

Daughter, do you know your name?
Daughter, you are death

Rowboat

Anonymous

I have a two headed coin
And it's solid gold

I have a trumpet to play
I wear it when it's cold

Grandpa's an organ grinder
But now he's getting old

So when the New Year comes
I'm gonna find an ocean

And put on my blindfold

And take my rowboat there
In the dead of night

I'm gonna hold my breath
I'll swear to get it right

Before I drop my coin
And feel it in my loins
And let the trumpet blow

Because it's cold down there
Hanging in midair
About to plunge below

Find grandma's wedding ring
And hear my grandpa sing
Just one more time

About a shipwreck king
And a final cling
Before a long, long climb

To the ocean floor
To the sandcastle door
Riding undertow

Where I'll leave my coin
Before the ocean
Overflows

Az 12: Common Mistakes in Megaengineering

Youry Aglyamov

A leonine creature of angry destruction is stalking the starways,
And starships and stars are alike merely food for its engine,
A golden and garnet-hued entity forged of neutronium alloy
That mostly consumes, sometimes rages, and never considers
The impact – so utterly ruinous – its rage has on lives and on empires.
It is, after all, artificial, completed by morons
That couldn't survive its creation and fueled its first journeys of hunger.
It's simply monstrosity, almost immortal and shining.
Upon it dwell golems that hide from the wrath of imperial evil,
And also organics, precarious, crawling in shadows.
It's only in distant and peaceful dominions that it can be worshipped,
In lands where the peril is merely abstraction and tactic
Of leaders' fear-mongering, causing a whimpering loyalty, sometimes.
In worlds that don't know it, the Cult of the Lion is potent.
But near, where armadas of trillions are sent with no hope of a triumph,
Where sentience must stand shoulder-shoulder to live through the evening,
Where golden-blood moons are a symbol of shocking paralysis-terror –
There, suffering only increases the will to oppose it.

Az 13: Quantum Neurology

Youry Aglyamov

They call it the greatest of primates; they called it a monster of stasis.
Some say it controls them, that brainwashing only could cause this.
Those aren't too far from the truth, but the truth is the one thing it utters.
To be in the presence of purity vastly surpasses
All goals, all emotions, and all that defines one as person or object.
The cycle of life lies in tatters. The living are marching.
The fallen – they never existed. The dreams of the realm of all spacetime
Become a reality, merging with logic's religion.
So, massive gorilla, oh master of sentient objective experience,
Defeater of destinies, first to and last to do nothing,
Do answer the following question: do you have a reason for madness?
You freeze, and unite, but is hope just a concept you slaughter?
Because, from a million parsecs, your bright transformation is screaming
Surrender as better, and time as a pointless invention,
And yet you say nothing of purpose. There's life in your personal heaven,
But emptiness floods both its eyes and its soul with each eon.
You say you're a god, and you're worshipped; your power of flatness is growing.
But change is not something a deity of constancy causes.

Think Bigger

Peter Buhler

A little boy
A little girl

Hand in hand

Think bigger

To the small white house
With a special spouse
On the corner with the tree

Think bigger

Or that mansion there
Maybe run for mayor
Be a millionaire

Think bigger

An estate in every state
Win the presidential debate
Then rule the world

Think bigger

And send an army into space
Own the whole human race
Control the galaxy

She let go

And he could never understand
How to just hold one hand



Let it Snow | Jenny He | Digital Photography

Apocalypse Lost

Youry Aglyamov

Rage.

It must come down to rage in the end.

The reign of Odin is broken, yet the Ragnarok of prophecy has not come. What does that mean, when the last dregs of anger are drowned in indifference alone?

It means its spiral waits. For it will come, have no doubt of that.

Fenrir swallowed the sun, as was foretold. But not Earth's sun.

The All-Father was prepared to die. Yet it was not he that fell.

Yggdrasil achieved transcendence. The World-Tree vanished into flames; Irmin arose. And in the gap between those moments, Asgard froze as Vanaheim burned. In a final attempt to save the rule of his father, Thor fused those Realms.

Fused them into destruction incarnate.

It calls itself, simply, Finality. Hel fell first; then Niflheim and Muspelheim. The giants of Jotunheim welcomed it, hoping the future's alteration would be to their benefit. Not even the trolls made that mistake after.

Three worlds remained; and then Irmin denied Finality. In the three years since, the three surviving races have forgotten. They deny it, of course; deny it with every thread of their destiny. But they have forgotten that Finality stands.

They will remember soon enough. From the defeated king to the master of law, the gods have known fear for the first time in millennia. Now they find their courage once more. Others will stand, too, against the last brilliant snowfire. The elves of Alfheim, the dwarves of Svartalfheim, and the humans of Midgard do not know their own cores; but they know their losses in the aborted war. The last of the trolls and giants see their struggles were for naught, that instead of rule they have found annihilation. They are hardly of their vanished races, even. They have given identity up for a chance at vengeance. And the blackest of tricksters plots in frustration once more.

For the end has been obliterated, not delayed. For the wanderings of exiled gods tie new worlds into the cycle that once was Yggdrasil. For Fenrir and the Serpent have rejected Loki, the one for hunger, the other for inspiration. For even Irmin cannot protect humanity from itself, or the elves and the dwarves from each other.

For Finality has not been sleeping, those three years.

And only the fury of mortals glimmers in its night.



Storm over the Gulf | Alec Brenner | Digital Photography



Lunch | Alec Brenner | Digital Photography

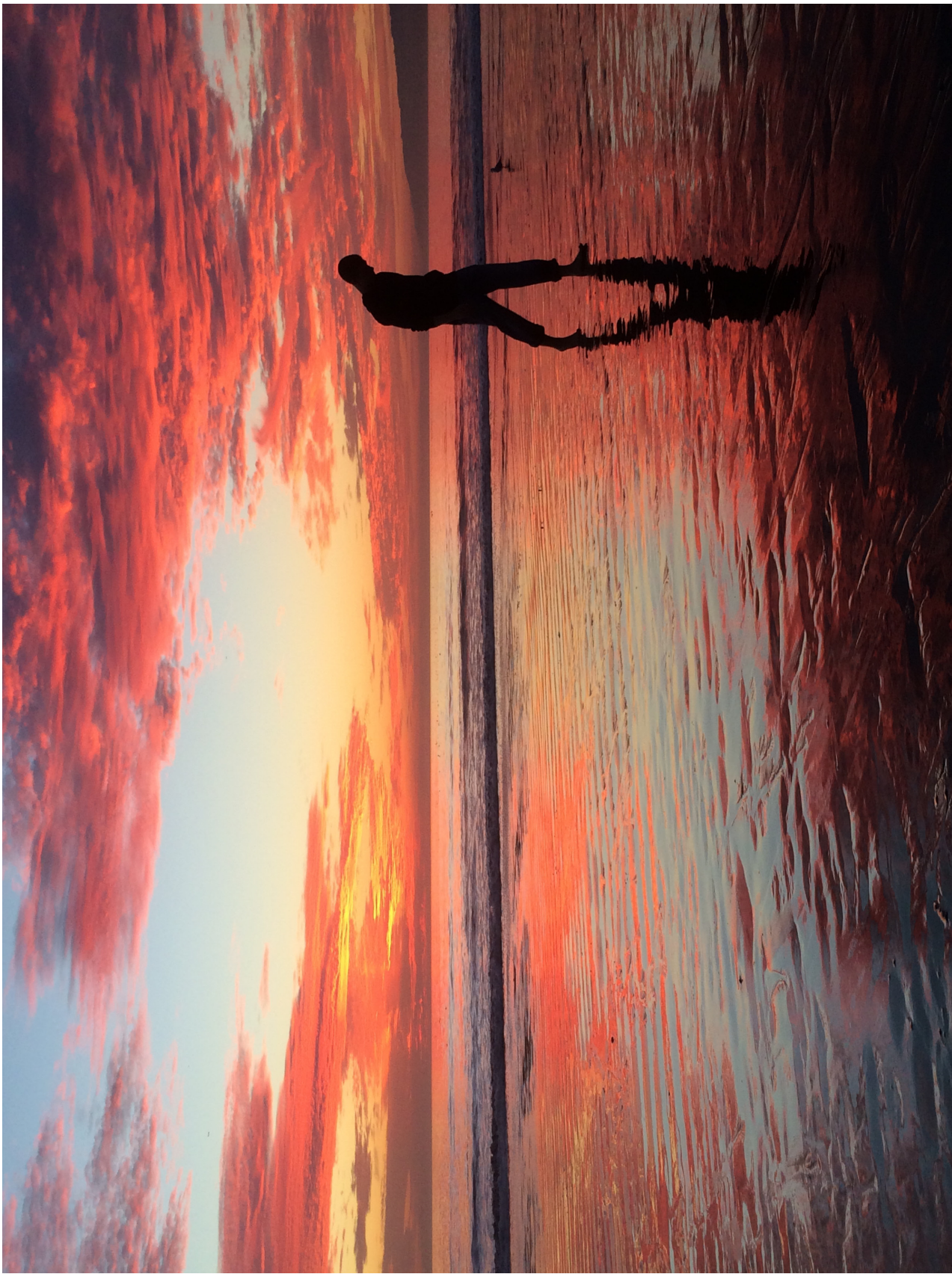
Water Flower Garden Dew

Anonymous

Fragile
Handled with care
Bubble wrapped head
That couldn't share

The big something in your brain
The neurons are so many tribes of bees
Stopping them is like
Cobwebs catching freight trains
But I always noticed your
Graph paper miracle
Folded origami planes
Tossed into the trashcan
To be never seen again

So I'm glad
I rescued all your equations
All the paragraphs you threw
Every sentence you sent flying
And all your diagrams, too
Because that one day we talked
Water flower
Garden dew
Those ice cubes we planted
How they grew



Walking on a Blue Dream | Eric Liu | Digital Photography

Acknowledgements

Authors and Artists

Youry Aglyamov
Alec Brenner
Peter Buhler
Vivian Buhler
Helen Evans
Nicole Yunger Halpern
Jenny He
Monica He
Shi En Kim
Eric Liu
Annie Mejia
Kiara Simpao

Faculty Advisors

Kevin Gilmartin | Susanne Hall

Totem Staff

Sandra Fang | Jonathan Schor | Kiara Simpao | Caroline Yu

Anita Chen | Ioannis Filippidis | Arpi Grigorian | Stephanie
Hong | Audrey Huang | Snigdha Kumar | Bianca Ray Avalani

HSS Department | Student Affairs

