

The Mill 2013

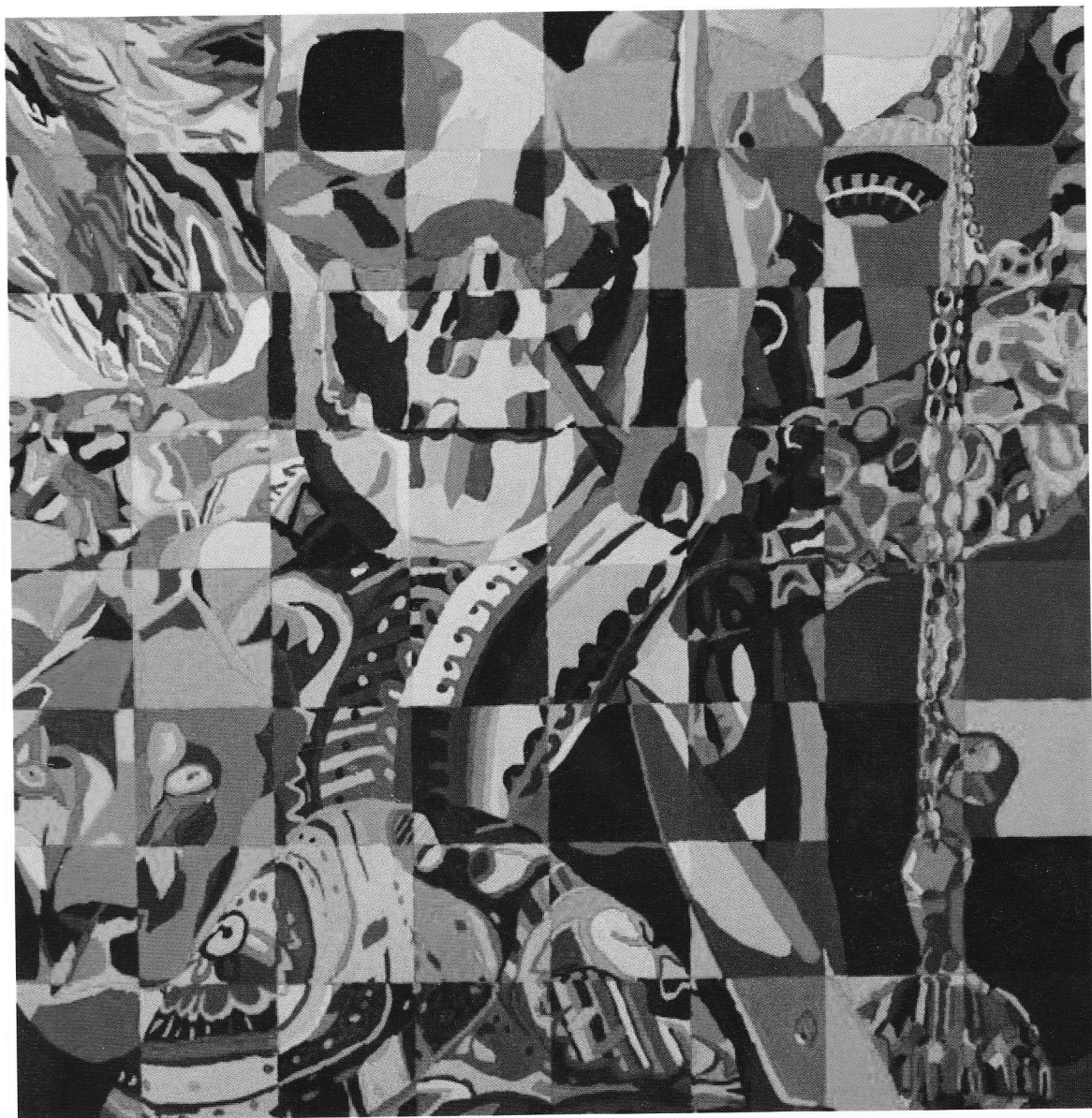


Table of Contents

Poetry

Erin Amschlinger	59	<i>En España</i>
Sarah Borrer	115	when the rum was gone
Sarah Borrer	18	Hollow
Nicole Campeotto	65	Love Song for an Outsider
Nicole Campeotto	118	For When Distance Grows Teeth
Nicole Campeotto	40	For Imagining a Distance of 3500 Miles
Nicole Campeotto	10	To Sing as Legends Do
Matthew Gesicki	8	Lazarus
Matthew Gesicki	41	Communion
Melina Papadapolous	43	Little Phoenix
Melina Papadapolous	126	What We Know About the Dark
Sabrina Pyles	116	The Speedfreak Giveth, the Speedfreak Taketh Away
Sabrina Pyles	73	<i>Reductio ad Absurdum</i>
Kailey Sherrick	38	Mirrors
Kailey Sherrick	81	Oriental Jewelry Box
Robyn Spangler	125	Departures
Robyn Spangler	12	Exposure
Robyn Spangler	106	In Memory of a Friend
Mary Beth Tweardy	94	Blue Mementos
Mary Beth Tweardy	27	The Right Husband
Samantha Westfall	28	Homebound

Creative Nonfiction

Laura Lagania	98	Three Coins in the Fountain
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Mirrors

{Kailey Sherrick}

I hoped your eyes would be blue,
That shade of pale ocean water
That resides off the coast of Antigua.
I wanted them like your father's,
Piercing and seductive, the blue
That made me drop my clothes
And brought you into the world.

You were born perfect
In almost every way.
But, to my dismay, your eyes were dark,
Large ponds of slate-gray.
I checked constantly
Over the next three months,
Hoping they would get lighter,
Praying they wouldn't be like mine.
My eyes, vomit green with flecks of brown,
Like acorns from a dying oak,
Strewn across burnt grass.

One evening at the beginning of autumn
I carried you out to watch the sunset.
The clouds were on fire, burning embers
Trapped against the horizon,
Smoldering in shades of crimson and orange.
You watched, open mouthed,
And your eyes turned to mirrors.
They etched the dying sky in perfect detail,
Stealing the beauty, capturing it like an artist.

In that breathtaking flash,
That last explosive gasp of color,
Before the sun slumbered behind the trees,
I saw the world staring back in those dark pools,
Caught, for just a moment, like a snapshot.

Oriental Jewelry Box

{Kailey Sherrick}

I dust for Grandmother. I clean the woodwork. She stands behind my feet, reminding me to pay attention to the corners. In my head I tell her to get down and do it herself, but then I imagine the sound of grating metal as she bends her steel knees, so I keep dusting. As a reward for my sweat and patience, she pulls me into her nostalgia, displaying pieces of tarnished jewelry, black and white photos, and knick-knacks. She pulls open a drawer and removes a box wrapped in cloth. She removes the covering, displaying to me an old jewelry box. The black lacquer is faded on the corners, the wood chipped and cracked on the bottom, yet the red and yellow poppies on the lid still hold their luster. I see them reflected in her small brown eyes as she tells me how Grandpa brought it back from Korea. She opens the lid, removing a necklace, her engagement ring, and a paper fan. She tells me the box is her most beloved possession.

I see my grandpa in a crowded market, a tall, pale, American with large ears and a big nose, clumsily navigating his way through an ocean of short bodies, passing vendors shouting out prices in a foreign tongue. He stops by one stand and runs his hand over the jewelry box, the poppies shining brightly in the afternoon sun. I see him flip open the paper fan, put the fan inside, and continue to stroll through the market.

I see my grandpa, a frogman, jumping from the helicopter into the ocean a short distance from a village. He swims to shore, machine gun wrapped in plastic. He clammers out of the water and in his haste, fires through the wrapping into a swarm of startled villagers. I see him enter a small thatched house, brandishing his gun and shouting at the woman who is clutching something tight to her chest. She turns to run and he fires, fragments of skull splattering across the wall. He flips her body over with the toe of his boot, expecting to see a gun clasped in those tiny fingers. Instead, he finds

the jewelry box. He pries it from her hands, trying not to look at her face. He wipes the blood from the poppies, mesmerized by how brilliant they seem even in the darkness of the house. He presses the box to his chest, pressure making the golden cross beneath his uniform dig deep into his skin. He turns to leave the house.

My grandpa, now decrepit, who sits in his overstuffed chair, who hears the voice of God berating him, who hears God commanding him to pray ceaselessly, to pray for that Korean woman and her jewelry box. The woman whose cries still echo in those large American ears.