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Nature

I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order.

--John Burroughs
Staff Letter

It’s March 30th, and our files are due in two days. It has begun to snow again in Rochester.

Signatures has been hard at work. We’ve always had a diverse staff, ranging multiple colleges, and this year is no different. Once again, our magazine is in the center of the left brain meeting right.

This year we decided to embrace RIT’s dual personality of technology and art. However, in true Signatures fashion, we added a twist. We noticed that most of the submissions this year fell into one of two categories: objects born from nature, and objects born from technology. Organic vs. synthetic, grass vs. steel.

We forget that in this world of new media and digital communications, there is a whole other force creating unexpected and exciting things everyday. Nature has always been a wondrous part of this world, and although a separate entity from man-made objects, something that constantly influences our lives.

This book is constructed to display both the separation and the integration of technology and nature. Each section begins with interlacing content, pieces that hold traits of both worlds. As you delve deeper, pieces will transform into pure interpretations of their respected section.

You can navigate through each section of the book using the Table of Contents in the middle panel. Experiment with the layout, and create your own story. Both sections are all but a page away from the other.

We’re all connected—wired in and standing our ground. Whether facing a virtual meltdown or natural disaster, we can’t separate the virtual world from reality. It gets harder every day. It’s not necessarily a bad thing. Look at RIT. We merge worlds on a regular basis.

Enjoy this year’s edition of Signatures literary-and-art magazine. Whether reading it outside or in the confines of a building, remember there is another world out there. And it’s not as far as it may seem.

SIGNATURES
LITERARY & ART MAGAZINE
Reverie
Madeleine Morris
Digital Photography
Lady's View
Kelly Hurley
Digital Photography
Autumn Grain Run

Stephen Caswell
Acrylic
Toes of Soil
By Sarah Talbot

Do not treat me so young
I am older than the Sun.
I share my eyes with mercury
And my fingers are the roots of ancestry.

You and I, you see,
We composed the stones that broke the continents
That broke the confidence of the haughty
And dared dreamers to cross
To prosper.

We lingered in waves that broke on land
And learned to sink, cool and founded
And learned to fly, hot and humid
Separated in cycle
And never erred.
Without carving a river in our wake.

The vein of steel in my blood
Built a thousand cities
With the breath of the mills
But never in vain. I have
Borne thousands of children.
On tempest and zephyr

So speeding down the highway
Barefoot on the gas pedal
I have been reunited with a fossil friend
- you were once my predator

And still wrought of more,
Of steady breath and pounding heart,
Toes of soil
Toes in soil
I am electric and weighted
I become a maker made and a traveler home in my fellows
I crack an arthritic mind, now remolded and searing
I write the book after Revelations
And offer it to little sister Sun.
Untitled

Ashleii Kono
Digital Painting
Untitled

Joleen Zubek
Photo Manipulation
Caitlin in the Cemetery

Kaitlin Egan
Digital Photography
Paradise Found
By Maureen MacGregor

There is a place where
the waves that gently lap against
the rock carved by glaciers millions
of years ago wash away my worries
and regrets and self consciousness.
Where I can finally be at ease,
finally be happy. There is a place, where
at the wrong end of the bay,
we are still pretty nice. Where we make
fudge that is to die for, and where
lazy days are spent with friends who are
more like family. Where we live in harmony
with the Indians in a 21st century kind of
way there is a place where I can take a
7 am canoe ride on calm flat mirror-like water
and be completely alone. Where the cicadas
and the wind and the water and the distant
sound of boats racing through the channel are
the white noise of seclusion. We’ve explored and
found secret rivers where frogs lie lazily on the surface
only to duck under with a final plop
as the shadows of our eager hands move above them.
We’ve jumped off rocks fifty feet high into a deep dark channel. We’ve cut our feet on the invasive mussels and caught fish without a license. Shh.
We’ve run out of gas and sat on someone’s dock, we don’t know whose, waiting for rescue. We’ve cut our propellers on hidden rocks, and allowed the Indians to laugh at us. We don’t know the water as well as they do. There is a place where I have spent countless summers, where shoes are optional but life-jackets aren’t.
Where a boat battery charges the phones we wish we hadn’t brought, and we bathe our sunburned bodies in the cool fresh water of the lake. There is a place where we let the wind coming down the channel bend us like it has bent the trees because we only hope that one day the wind will carry our ashes over this sacred place as it has my grandmother’s.
This Cold Earth

Lisa Eggleston
Digital Photography
Waiting For the Sunset
Yuya Takeda
Digital Painting
They always hid.

The other fish—the clownfish, the stingrays, the sharks, even the constantly frowning sea turtles—swim in their glass cages proudly, as if they know they are on display, and intend to make the most out of their captivity by attracting the crowds as much as they can with their flash, their playfulness, their looks.

But the octopus, they hide.

Even when I press up to the glass as closely as I can, I’m not able to spot the octopus in its tank. The guy next to me is looking just as closely as I am. When I start to move away, he whispers loudly—"There!" and he points to the far right corner of the tank. I lean to that direction and, after a moment, find what he has spotted. There, huddled in a soft mass, is the octopus, its arms wrapped so tightly around itself that only its bulbous head shows. It is camouflaged in the sand.

I feel sorry for it even while I gaze at it. Unlike the other animals, it seems miserable in its captivity. I push the straps of my backpack farther up my shoulders and make my way out the aquarium.

***

Octopus is on my bed. It wraps its arms around my chair legs. It wavers across the carpet, wriggles its way up the walls, and rests in the corners of the ceiling. When it swims, it spirals through the water, splitting it with many arms and bubbles and finally a great blur of black ink that blinds me.

***

“How was the trip to the aquarium?” asks the man who sits across me at the dining table.

“It was nice,” I say, looking down at my plate. I push the salad with my fork.

“Which fish did you like the best?” he chews very loudly and I can see the meat in his mouth being ground up between his teeth. He smacks his lips.

“The sharks.” I spear a cherry tomato, place it in my mouth. It squirts onto my tongue.
“Ah! Have you considered shark diving, to become friends?” he chortles at this. Juice from the meat drips down his lip, and he dabs at it with a paper napkin. “Why did you like the sharks, though?”

Because they eat the weak. “They never sleep. They swim forever, and if they stop, they die.”

The man who sits across me makes noises in his throat as if he understands what I mean. “I know you still have your dreams. I hear you in your sleep.”

“Yes,” I chew my lettuce leaf and watch the octopus twist slowly across the kitchen floor.

***

My belly—it is soft. The most vulnerable part of me. I wrap my arms around myself as I lie in bed, and I draw my knees up to my elbows. It is dark out of my window, but I watch it because octopus is on the other side, its suction cups sticking to the glass. Its mouth clicks softly. I hold myself tightly and watch it.

The octopus shall save me. It sees the wound in my belly, the scar on my soft skin, and it shall heal me. It shall reach out to touch me—

—and it shall not hurt me.

The man who lies next to me reaches out to me, blindly it seems, and I fall into the sea. The saltwater washes over my face and I swallow it. Though it burns my throat, it is delicious. Octopus swims, wheeling gently around me. It seems to command the sea with its multitude of arms, its eyes all-seeing. It flows through the water, rippling and masterful. It shall watch over me, for it protects the weak.

***

I go to the aquarium. I stand at the octopus tank and this time, I find the octopus easily. It is still hiding, but in a different corner. I keep my hands on my backpack straps and watch it. It is so still, but I find comfort.

Someone stands next to me and whispers: “Do you see it?”

“Yes,” I say.

“Where?”

I point to it.
“Oh…thank you.”

We both stand in silence. He whispers again: “You’re back.”

I look at him, surprised. Then I realize he is the same man that had spotted the octopus yesterday. “Oh. Yes.”

“Do you come here everyday?”

“No. This is only my second time.” I look back to the octopus resting in its tank. “But I love the octopus.”

“Yes, me too. It keeps a lot of secrets.”

We are quiet. Then I tell him: “I see it often. In my dreams.” I hesitate, and then decide to tell the truth. “And when I’m awake.”

“Then you’re lucky.” He says this as if he is happy for me. I look at him, and see he means it.

***

The window—it is my passage to the open sea. I stand on the windowsill, inhale the air. The salty, sweet smell of the waves reaches me. I look down. The large rolling sea greets me, waiting for my entrance. Octopus, clinging to the windowsill, creeps like a kiss over my bare feet. I release my hands, and jump.

There is no slap of the ground, the concrete. Only the plunging of gentle welcoming ocean. It washes over me as I splash deeper and deeper, yet there is no pressure. There is only purity. The spiraling arms of the octopus draw nearer than ever before. I shudder—and reach out to touch it.
Jungle Village
Zachary Retz
Digital Painting
A Timeline
By Alyssa Miller

I am from a place that I cannot define,
I am from a collection of scrapbooks of where I was:

I am from the crumbling house that held
Perfect snapshots of a family,
(Before my memory.)
I am from custody battles and court dates.

I am from my grandparents’ house,
Smelling of orange sponge cake on a Wednesday night.
I am from the bags of yarn and knitting needles,
I am from the old war tunes that grandpa sang.
I am from the old factory machine downstairs.

I am from the old apartment that I knew as home.
(But my mother hated.)
I am from the lavender walls and floral carpet.
I am from the awkward cooking smells from the family below.
I am from bedtime stories and pop-up books.
I am from the tall townhouse by the lake,
I am from the grey gravel path,
That twisted around the complex.
I am from the local pet shop.
I am from the collection of the dog's baby teeth.

I am from the house by the primroses.
I am from the 1950s pineapple wallpaper that was ripped away.
I am from the house my mother could call her own.

I am from caramel lattes.
I am from countless bottles of acrylic paint
And blank stretched canvases.

I am from the filled and abandoned marble notebooks,
Documenting the changes of who I was
And who I am turning into.
Stephen
Susan Dimeglio
Digital Photography
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R.I.T
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Technology

Art challenges technology; technology inspires the art.

- John Lasseter
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Memory Bubbles

Yuya Takeda

Digital Photography
The Art of Comedy
Inspired by the opera Pagliacci by Leoncavallo Ruggiero
excerpted
Evan Jay Williams

1

The cameras were still rolling; Nedda and Tonio, as "Columbina" and "Taddeo," respectively, were bantering their way through one of those inexhaustible "lovesick-fool-trips-over-his-own-feet-to-woo-an-alooft-woman" scenarios. This was Colombina's bedroom set; there was even a second-story balcony built in as either an homage to Romeo and Juliet or a lack of originality. Tonio had heard the sudsly dialogue rehearsed all day and consequently did not want to hear another word, least of all slipping from his own mouth. The producers would have been better off if they had fired their writers and simply hacked together dialogue using random newspaper clippings. That way, at least they would have been assured one or two tolerable lines.

Taddeo:

(beseechingly)

Oh Columbina, my dear, why have you forsaken me?

2

Columbina:

(teasingly)

Oh, Taddeo, amore, you know I could never, ever, part from you. But, think now, what of my husband Pagliacci, who will be returning at any moment? Shouldn't you run along, lest we be discovered in a moment of regrettable passion?

Taddeo:

(fervently)

Every moment in your inspiring presence is a passionate one, Columbina fair, never regrettable!
Columbina:
(wiping her fevered brow)
Oh, Taddeo, you flatter me so! Now, be gone with you! Shoo, shoo!

Tonio limped off camera; Nedda remained in character for her solo scene. Unlike in film, on a soap there was no need to shoot a separate take. If at all possible, the studio would have been content to simply point a camera at the set and film the entire season in one go. Once clear of the set, a stagehand passed Tonio his cane, and he leaned on it, alleviating slightly the flooding pain in his right leg. Supporting his weight was a constant struggle even all these years after the injury; his other limbs had never grown quite strong enough to compensate. Tonio desired Nedda, the actress, but he had jumped that track long ago. As if his unrequited love wasn't embarrassing enough, his damned character was so much like his real self he could no longer distinguish between acting and longing. He found himself reciting, before millions of people, his own private thoughts and passions. Why couldn't he just pine silently, be afforded some small measure of dignity in his misery? He would give anything to rebuild the ruins of the fourth wall, he would re-lay its scattered bricks from the foundation up, if need be. And yet, for all that, Tonio was the best actor of the troupe. Taddeo was endearingly pathetic because Tonio was endearingly pathetic, Taddeo was gentle, unassuming, pained, because such was Tonio. Tonio winced as his leg seized up as if clenched in an iron vice, and the contraction triggered an acute memory, nearly as painful.

A fresh, eager year splintered the air. It was New Year's in Rome now, and Tonio hadn't slept since the previous year. He had spent the night toast ing himself, for lack of anything better to do, in the hotel bar to the rear of the lobby, intent on escape. He had had the role on La Commedia Dell'Arte for less than a month and already he needed to flee — it was imperative he distance himself from Nedda as soon as possible. He knew he'd never be able to resist her, not so long as he was a red-blooded, full-bodied son of Italy. But what was a man to do? She was a married woman, and her husband was a pathetic milquetoast with whom they worked every day. For the sake of the entire cast, he had to leave. Of course, she'd never noticed him while they
were delivering lines side by side, so why should she miss his presence if he left town now, went back to selling shoes for the rest of his life, never getting in anyone's way again?

Tonio stood at the gate to the metro stop; it wouldn't open until seven a.m., but already the drunken survivors of last night's revelries were gathering, leaning on each other for support, singing a highly chromatic rendition of Ave Maria. Cheeks flushed and raw from the air and the alcohol, these young people were ready for the future, though most likely they'd already forgotten last night. Tonio crinkled the bar napkin still clamped in his palm. Beneath the hotel logo, he had scribbled his New Year's resolutions with one of those stubby golf pencils drunkards used for lottery cards. A single resolution, to be precise.

When the bleary-eyed ticket clerk finally unlocked the gates, half an hour late, proving that efficiency was not a resolution of the metro line for the new year, Tonio descended to the platform to catch the first train on the line. He made it there first, as all the inebriated youth were having trouble getting down the stairs. The clattering train was heralded by a burst of hot, stale air. Tonio boarded, and as the doors were set to close automatically, with the certainty of stage curtains on this most recent episode of his life, he crumpled the wad of napkin and tossed it through the diminishing crack between the metal halves of the doors. But the drafts of the cavernous metro station caught the ball of paper, lifted it before it found the platform, and blew his resolution back in his face. It was only then that Tonio realized he was on the wrong train.

It was only a napkin, Tonio shouldn't have lunged for it; what was there to save, anyway? He could have saved his leg, that's what. Now, all these years later, he was still here with "The Art of Comedy," with Nedda, with his feelings, with everything but the freedom to reveal his love like a man. His leg had shattered in the metro doors, but the injury was deeper than that. Nedda had finished her monologue, acting as if she were suffering through a fainting spell, swooning over her impossibly romantic melodrama. If her husband's character came back home too soon, and discovered her lover, who was to rendezvous with her at midnight by the rose bush under the balcony ... well, viewers would have to wait and tune in next week.
Skyscrapers
Kelsey Wa
Photo Manipulation
Ornament

Evan Bracken
Digital Photography
Universal Remote
By Vaughn Faison

I'll take over the world with a universal remote
One T.V. at a time
Ruin recreation
Threaten the masses with a black screen
No one wants a black screen
Maybe I'll use static

Yes, static
Constant static
With words barely audible
A fetus whisper
Those with ears align with me
Those with eyes build my throne
Barcode

Andrew Hallinan
Digital Photography
Chevy
By Julianna Gabler

You liked that, didn’t you?
You liked the scrub between your metal sheets,
down underneath your outside exterior,
the dirt, the dust, and the grit
washing away under the folds of water.
You earn for adventure, don’t you?
That secret slip and sudden roar in the darkness,
the tension suspended on your frames
feeling infinite under the moonless nights.
You miss us, don’t you?
You miss children sneaking into your backseats,
breaking and playing with your zippers,
surprises, giggles, and moths flutter out.
You lost your heart, didn’t you?
Remembering you used to shine a bold, radiant red,
but now your gloss only glows dimly
with the rare appearance of soap and water.
You want one more last huzzah, don’t you?
We’ll turn on that old stereo and grind those gears,
riding under the moon and our limbs in the air,
to that lonely hidden hill where we met.

for the death of a friend should not be spent alone.
Ex-Lax Smoothie

Zachary Retz
Digital Painting
Martyrdom
By Laura Davies

Squeeze another stone down the gullet
Wash it down with soot
Slip another needle under the eyelids
Another ring in the tongue

Stitch the skin back onto bone
Tuck the muscle under the ligaments
Stretch back the cheeks
Pin back the ears

Blood and tar dribble from the mouth
Leaks between the ribs
Seeps from the eyes
A simple dab and it looks intentional

Exhale embers
Inhale smoke
Yet the body is cold
And the core is dead
Bionic Horses

Seul Gi Cho
Watercolor
Little Jeff the Long-Neck Half-Giraffe Man

By James McKay

Little Jeff the long-neck half-giraffe man
does his math in base four.
He’s tired of tiny necktie entanglements
and isn’t taken seriously as a professional.
He’s twelve hands old,
and wants to try bowling sometime.

Little Jeff the long-neck half-giraffe man
only eats Lucky Charms for breakfast.
He’s tired of tall cereal mascots,
and likes the way the marshmallows slide down his throat.
He sleeps curled into a tiny ball
and wants a new book to read.

Little Jeff the long-neck half-giraffe man
prefers to ride his bicycle.
He’s tired of ducking to get in his car
and sticking his head through the sunroof to drive.
He likes going for walks in the city,
and wants to brush his neck against more things.
Little Jeff the long-neck half-giraffe man
doesn’t have good benefits.
He’s tired of fretting his health,
and wonders if he can get veterinary coverage from work.
He enjoys the chin-up bars at the gym
and wants to join the marines.

Little Jeff the long-neck half-giraffe man
never learned the guitar.
He’s tired of being so dull,
and contemplates learning to play his digeridoo.
He can’t remember the last concert he saw,
and wants to start a folk band.

Little Jeff the long-neck half-giraffe man
wishes he could kiss his girlfriend when they fuck.
He’s tired of the head-ducking in doorways
and dodging second-story sunlit reflections-
The kind that make him think twice about
trying to propose... again.

Little Jeff the long-neck half-giraffe man
Hates skydiving.
He’s tired of looking down all the time,
and he’s scared of catching in the cords.
He thinks he’s alone in the world
and wants to look up to someone.
Morning

Christina Beck
Digital Photography
Key Scape
Ashley Billings
Acrylic
Cerberus
Jai Kamat
Digital Painting
Pickslide
By Steven DeRidder

I've got somethin' in my hair
Not pushy pops
Alternative rocks but
Motions to watch
Me turning on
The amp in our common room
As we sing, collegian and drunk
On boredom
'Let's drop it!': the pads and phones
And controller
Displays we pop
culture
On you 'cause
No more projections
booking our faces with
Cameras our hair
Destruct mirrors
Bam--
Unsellable individualism
A joke even we laugh at
Beating our follicles
To the solo we love,
Rocking and rolling
the journey
To the carpet
Grounded we believed
The 80s were back
Dormwork and loans
the rift and synth
Burning that time
With banzai
Notes, voicing:
'It's all cool, bro'
Vines

Erin Glaberson
Pencil
For Friend
By Nicolas Eckerson

I've seen this couch in other people's lives
in apartment corners through flights of doors
in the back of basements under paneling, pop punk posters where
prom pictures would be the drop of saline solution in the spoon
and vault slant ceilings bad for the forehead
especially a furniture mover's.

Corner couches too, long enough for the dog to sleep
on folded clothes unswatted and feet shot up on reaching down for the remote.
Comfortable.
Twenty two and living home college and work
a stitch on the weekends a ball for the week
a roll to round out the semester.
Or twenty two and on/off campus
on/off the phone till it is home to flip the cushion
and flip tomorrow for the change you know isn't there,
tell off and reclined.

Woo wee, down into that easy chair.

At home the parents walk by and its old fart-bank nickname
makes it funny for friends
and when they come over the sheet cover is buttoned
arm to arm
don't let them see that we let it have handles
and the foot stool.

So settled,
it asks you how it fit around the glassware cabinet by the door
alarm would be speeding an antenna down a glass fence
How did it not take the stairway picture wall for a crash cleaning
pass through the kitchen, head thru hanging handed down pots, make the patio
swing sigh.
It couldn't get by.
Like the one across the street
sister's boyfriend that sold out and got kicked out his own doors
lives there head down works weekends and on making himself
little jokes until he has a spot at the table,
the couch in the corner.

But my friend put his feet down on his own rugs
as his parents, my brother's cub scout leader
and bank teller who tells me each week something not about him
home 11 Lyon Drive fell off the bus
off the frame wall out of recent calls
woo weee down into that easy chair
into that seat so sat it was a sofa.
Sixteen People

Ho Moon

Oil
It’s Not Easy Being Green
By Jan Dvorak

They say history is a loop
no need to be alarmed
trapped in foreign land
I watch history and I go:
I saw this before,
but the names are wrong
I know how this story goes
I open my mouth, but then shut it
“No! No, no, no!”
The man in the uniform shouts at me.
“Aliens are not allowed to interfere!”
But I’m not green!
I don’t understand
at first, then it hits me.
Like the baton from the man in uniform
I was just standing on the public sidewalk
But in their eyes we are all guilty
and now I understand
I am an alien, I must not interfere
I’m not allowed to help
even if I pay the green papers
I guess it’s not easy being green
Colophon

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