



STRAIGHT FORWARD

Issue Twelve

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Photographers

SARAH DIAMOND BURROWAY

POETS

Jason Dean Arnold, Devon Balwit, James Cox, JD DeHart, Thomas Fucaloro, Louis Gallo, and more...

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Fragments for Felix

by Jason Dean Arnold

Create a spill of individually wrapped candies

Equivalent to the weight of everyone that you love

Hold all of them in your hands

Hold them in your mouth

Until they melt away

Share this with the world

Then, lose them all again

always wanting

by Devon Balwit

the dog pukes up the mango I feed him / feed him with my own hands / wolfing down
the sweet /the sweetly indigestible / as I do / always wanting never thinking /
thinking *what shall I do with desire? / can brittle ribs cage its sun globe / make it / make
it mine?* / like the dog nosing between the legs of strangers / in their plates / scrounging
scraps / scrapping for what he can find / the dog hangs / hangs his head / sad for the
mess / as I am / always sad / after the fact /instinct pulling irresistibly fierce / fiercely
compelling / the next ill-advised mouthful.

The Veterans Playing Checkers in the Park

by James Cox

No matter what else she wears,
if her feet are bare
as she walks the gravel path
so carefully, then sits,
knees crossed, on the park bench,
her blue checked dress a landscape,
face in shade, lips parted,
breathing the cool park air,
with patches of sun on her arms,
she will be naked
to the men who watch from the table,
who play checkers idly and sip cold beers
taken from the blue cooler on the ground.
Tree shadows glide over their shoulders.
Hands with hunter green fingers
tug at their elbows and delve their innards
to pluck strings of memory.
The men sing soft ohs and watch.
When she leans forward to rub
the sole of her foot,
pressing the flesh slowly,
kneading the thick pad below the toes,
their bodies hurt
as though stretching
an old sealed wound.

Steer

by JD DeHart

Heading straightway
past glittering dark stars
of broken glass

Tracings of shard
messages on pavement

Steering to the next
exit, learning how to turn
around, learning

Not to look too closely
at the wayfarers
stranded at the side of the road.

Friends

by Thomas Fucaloro

I want to die
a lot
and be
reborn
a swan

with a glorious tree trunk neck.

I want you
to hold the ax.

Sears Nights

by Louis Gallo

In those days I would ride with my dad
Over to Sears in the Gentilly East mall,
Already run-down, shoddy and sad.
Katrina would finish it off years later.
I realize now that Dad had no reason
To make those drives other than
Wanting to get away for a spell.

He tinkered with the bins of screws and bolts,
Rubbed them between his fingers as if to test
Their solidity. He didn't really need them
But always bought a few.
This was before Lowe's and Home Depot
When Sears actually sold single screws
And nuts and washers and carriage bolts.

Later we might cross the street
To FroSTop and drink those icy mugs
Of root beer that tasted like Castoria.
Dad liked to run the car with the wipers on
Even when it wasn't raining. As he sipped
He would hum some Mozart motet to the beat
Of those wipers. We didn't talk much.

There was a night club called Pussy Cat Lounge
Right next to FroSTop but it would be
A while before my friends and I ventured there.
At the time it seemed evil to me
With its multi-colored neon insignia
Of a glass of champagne, complete
With bubbles evaporating above.
One time I saw a woman strut in,
A cigarette dangling from her lip,
A woman I might have died for only a few years later.
Dad noticed too.
I watched his eyes follow her
in the rear view as she approached.
This is how largesse comes into and disappears
From our lives, in glances, reflections,
Momentary glimpses.

Dad, I'm speaking to you now in a way
I didn't then. Because the memory of Sears
And those ridiculous screws and bolts
Suddenly popped into my mind like
One of Pussycat's champagne bubbles—
and it's already fading.
I want to tell you how much I liked
Those drives, away from homework, weeknights,
Mom and Ruthie, waiting for us with a plate
Of hot cross buns, molten sugar dripping
Down the sides of dough, stupid TV shows.

You can't buy single wood screws any more
And those pre-packaged are half plastic now.
The heads strip unless you go really slow
And aim that driver squarely into a groove.
You told me once that things don't change,
They thicken. Well, can't say I agree.
I think they dissolve. But I know what you meant.

If We Grow Old Together

by Lana I. Ghannam

Let's trade tongues in the basement.
How does my name sound between sheets?

I want to sleep beneath leaves.
I want to crunch like beetle wings.

Don't rub grass on my naked neck.
We have to catch crickets

off tree trunks. This honey is too sweet
on my teeth. Let's get our eyes stuck

in telescopes. The sun is too square today.
Why won't we fit into our caves?

I need to hold my head
under running river water

before we go home. Bury me in the clouds,
and don't come looking for me.

I Can Rotate

by A.J. Huffman

tires,
blow a man
to erection in seconds,
calculate the quarterback
stats from the Monday night game
while fixing dinner for four,
and write
a sonnet
while loading the dishwasher.
I can reiterate
Pythagoras' theory

from memory
and probably even juggle
chainsaws in an emergency
of amusement. I hold the known
abilities of a thousand ghosts
I will never use.
I do not doubt
I can do anything except maybe
survive the meaningless
mundanity
that has become my regime,
this bitter stagnance
I am forced
to swallow daily
as life.

Invisible Shells

by Rob Hunter

Oddities clutter the studio: a cow skull, worn out shoes, half-baked clay pots,
recyclable egg carriers—clear plastic shells cradling pools of paint for art students
whose

day dreaming travels well beyond a still life. The warm fall day
inspires the mind's art of escape from invisible shells.

Not even the veteran art teacher can focus, open windows inviting
autumn's sweetness beaming in on bands of dusty sunlight that
revive the longing for
youthful daring and flouting consequences.

Creating a Blank

by Myrta Köhler

To have a sword
cutting through my thoughts
like the sound of geese
taking off from the lake,
on a quiet winter morning!

Murk, Wake

by Kaey Liu

night,

dropped darkness;
the blur
of static glow,
swell spitting image
multiplied.

heavy head,
thin neck.

slouching
to a room,

thick thighs
pull through
assertive atmosphere.

—

four walls,

the slow
knee bend,
(high step toward
hiatus).
two times,
a tuck.

lie foetal-curved
in a resting place.

—

feeble sparrow thump of heart.
no eye,
only rocking blindness.

sink deep into
blurred dawn-avoidance.

14 ways to approach a moon

by Alina Stefanescu

The first full moon in the month of October is known as the hunter's moon. Its fullness may be fallow. Promises muttered in its light are not platinum minerals but mere passing frenzies of color. The dusk's curious quotations. A single bewitch-able sight. A color is not a solid thing. Not a thing which can be broken into component parts on a coffee table. Not history. You married the American with an easy last name. A name that guarantees ice cubes in the glass of soda. The wedding stayed small because you've never trusted those who make a spectacle of belief. Either you believe it or you don't. Cut the cake and hold up a slice. What is trust: the words a person whispers beneath the shade of a sassafras tree. A halo rendered by sunlight. You swear never to say linden again. You have killed all the trees which came before him. History begins now. With this twelve-inch gap between the metal and the word. A vow.

Sometimes mother tells me stories

by Lauren Suchenski

sometimes mother tells me stories.
sometimes mother braids my hair – grass seed feed and long, legged goose songs
sometimes mother leads me to water, sometimes mother leads me to shelter.
always, mother sings her silent dance.

sometimes father invents the sky
sometimes brother tramples the forest
sometimes sister pulls the apron of the sky
over the skirt legs of the sea
always, mother sings her silent dance.

used to be, people knew when family went missing
used to be, shadowed sunsets always sunk
but now and then and nowadays,
days go drifting through your hands

putty-silk and satin gold – days go drifting through your hands

some wash up and some wash out,
some grow back and some grow in,
some turn time like wheels of grain, some burn brains
like ash and ember
some leave earth to tick and tock
but always mother sings her silent dance.



Biographies

Jason Dean Arnold

Jason's writing can be found online and in print. A multidisciplinary work (composed for eight musicians and readers) was recently performed at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Jacksonville (MoCA-Jax), Florida. He holds a doctorate in education and currently works at the University of Florida's College of Education.

Devon Balwit

Devon Balwit is a poet and educator from Portland, Oregon. She has a chapbook, *Forms Most Marvelous*, forthcoming from dancing girl press (summer 2017). Her recent poems have appeared in numerous print/on-line journals, among them: *Oyez*, *Red Paint Hill*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Calamus*, *Immix*, *Serving House Journal*, *The Journal of Applied Poetics*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Timberline Review*, *Trailhead Magazine VCFA*, *The Prick of the Spindle*, and *Permafrost*.

James Cox

At an early age I was struck by lightning and entered an alternate reality. I eventually developed cosmic consciousness. Now, still on fire, though dying down, I trust Dao, read and write, live and love. Serenity and silence sustain me.

JD DeHart

JD DeHart is a writer and teacher. His work has appeared in *Gargouille* and *Ancient Heart Magazine*, among other publications. He has been nominated for Best of the Net.

Thomas Fucaloro

Thomas Fucaloro is the author of two books of poetry published by Three Rooms Press, most recently *It Starts from the Belly and Blooms*, which received rave reviews. The winner of a performance grant from the Staten Island Council of the Arts and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, he has been on three national slam teams. He holds an MFA in creative writing from the New School and is a cofounding editor of *Great Weather for Media* and *NYSAI* press. He is a writing coordinator at the Harlem Children's Zone and lives in Staten Island.

Louis Gallo

Louis Gallo's work has appeared or will shortly appear in *Southern Literary Review*, *Fiction Fix*, *Glimmer Train*, *Hollins Critic*, *Rattle*, *Southern Quarterly*, *Litro*, *New Orleans Review*, *Xavier Review*, *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*, *Missouri Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Texas Review*, *Baltimore Review*, *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, *The Ledge*, *storySouth*, *Houston Literary Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Raving Dove*, *The Journal (Ohio)*, *Greensboro Review*, and many others. Chapbooks include *The Truth Change*, *The Abomination of Fascination*, *Status Updates* and *The Ten Most Important Questions*. He is the founding editor of the now defunct journals, *The Barataria Review* and *Books: A New Orleans Review*. He teaches at Radford University in Radford, Virginia.

Myrta Köhler

Myrta Köhler is a journalist, editor and photographer. She grew up in Vienna, is currently living in Berlin and loves, most of all, to be in a state of transit. Her work is published in print and digital media in Germany and abroad.

Lana I. Ghannam

Lana Issam Ghannam is a first-generation Palestinian-American, MFA graduate of University of Central Florida, and part-time teacher. Her work has appeared in *Prism Review*, *Raleigh Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Sukoon*, and *The Cape Rock*, among other journals. She loves reading and writing, though motherhood currently rules all. Lana lives in Sanford, FL with her husband, son, and two cats.

A.J. Huffman

A.J. Huffman has published thirteen full-length poetry collections, fourteen solo poetry chapbooks and one joint poetry chapbook through various small presses. Her most recent releases, *Degeneration* (Pink Girl Ink), *A Bizarre Burning of Bees* (Transcendent Zero Press), and *Familiar Illusions* (Flutter Press) are now available from their respective publishers. She is a five-time Pushcart Prize nominee, a two-time Best of Net nominee, and has published over 2600 poems in various national and international journals, including *Labletter*, *The James Dickey Review*, *The Bookends Review*, *Bone Orchard*, *Corvus Review*, *EgoPHobia*, and *Kritya*. She is also the founding editor of *Kind of a Hurricane Press*. www.kindofahurricanepress.com.

Rob Hunter

Kaey Liu

Kaey is a bi-cultural writer from Beijing and currently attending Smith College, where her choice of transportation is the unicycle. Her poetry has appeared several times in *Labrys Art & Literature Magazine*. In her free or borrowed time, she pets dogs and explores forms of silence in the pursuit of truth and art.

Alina Stefanescu

Alina Stefanescu was born in Romania and lives in Alabama with four kindred mammals. She is currently fascinated by Benjamin Fondane and quantum theory. She looks forward to reading from her poetry microchap, *Ipokimen* (Anchor and Plume Press, November 2016). More online at www.alinastefanescu.com or @aliner.

Lauren Suchenski

Lauren Suchenski is a fragment sentence-dependent, ellipsis-loving writer and lives somewhere where the trees change color. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Gambling the Aisle*, *Dark Matter Journal*, *Red Fez*, *Vine Leaves Literary Journal*, *Black Elephant Literary Journal*, *Stoneboat Literary Magazine*, *The Soap Box*, *Centum Press*, *Unbroken Journal* and *Five 2 One Magazine*, among others. She loves to swim inside syllables.



Straight Forward is a labor of love with the goal to find and publish beautiful poetry that doesn't hide its power from readers. We have been working with poets since 2011 and wouldn't have it any other way.

Founder and Managing Editor

Lindsey Lewis Smithson has her MFA from UCR's Palm Desert Low Residency MFA. She was the Managing Editor for The Coachella Review and founded Straight Forward Poetry to help create a home for quiet, humble poems.. Some of her poetry has appeared on The Nervous Breakdown, This Zine Will Change Your Life, Word Riot and Every Writer's Resource: Everyday Poems. She also reads for Hobart and The Whistling Fire.



Submit



Poetry

There are no restrictions on length or form, but we are looking for poetry that is clear and honest. We will consider previously published writing as long as the earlier publication information is provided at the time of submission. Submit no more than six poems at a time.

Submission with Notes

For ten dollars poets can submit up to six poems for consideration that will also receive notes back. Every piece will be up for possible publication and every piece will get detailed notes and a letter. It's like an MFA for ten dollars.

Editing

Poets with chapbooks of full manuscripts can also submit their work for editing and consideration to be published. Chapbook editing services, up to twenty pages, run \$100 while full manuscripts are \$200. Visit the website for full details.