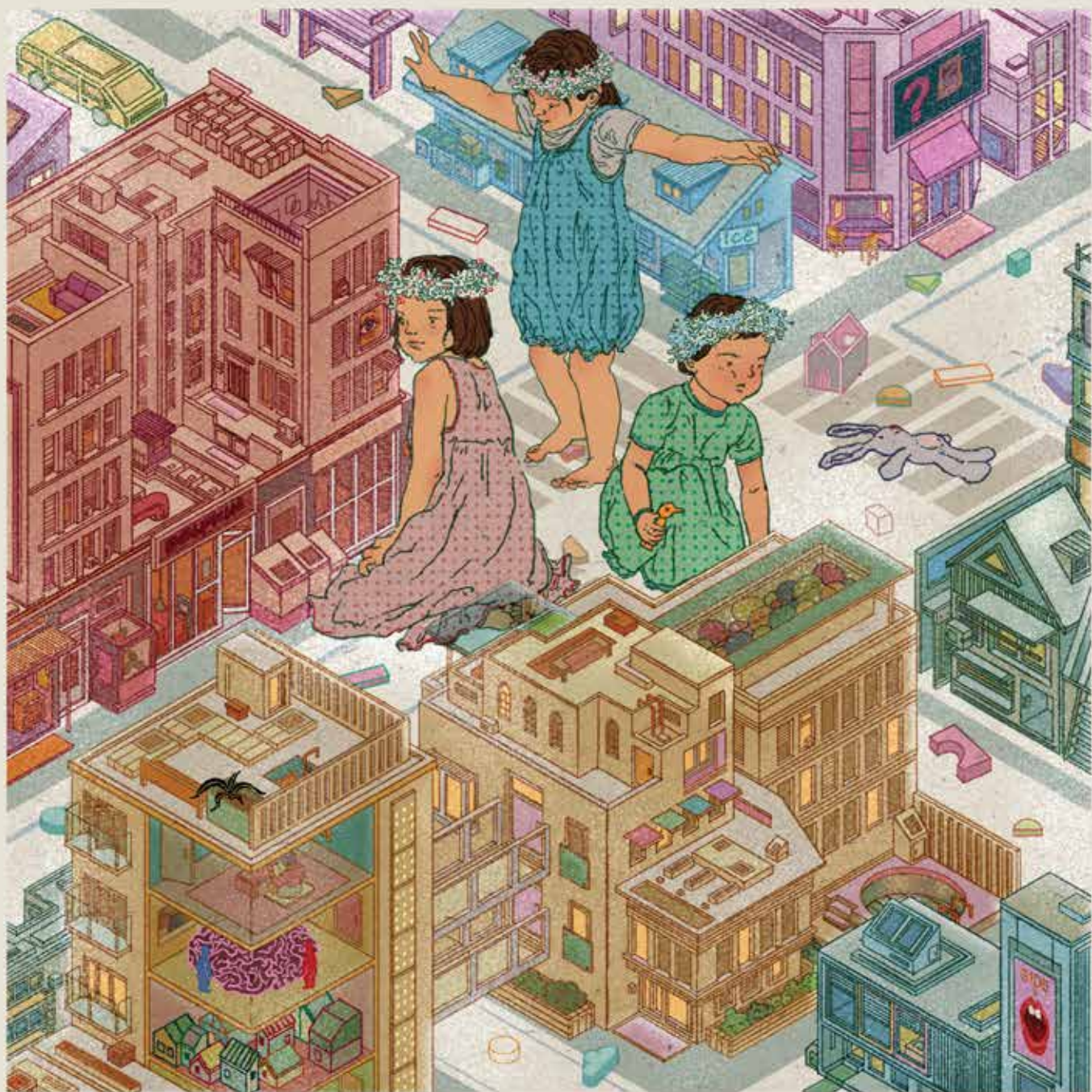


Still Point *Arts Quarterly*

NATURE ART SPIRIT

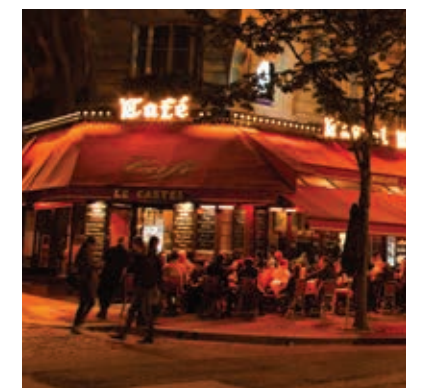
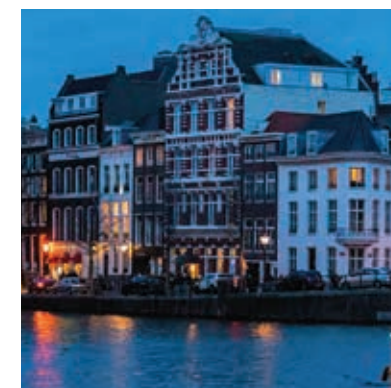
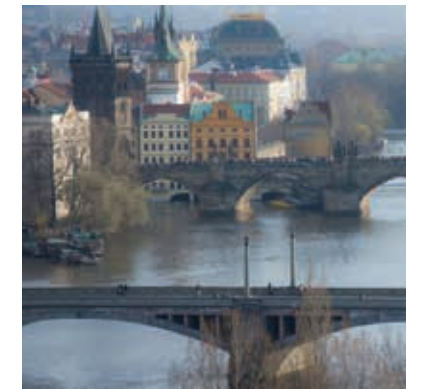
WINTER 2022 • ISSUE NO. 48



nature inspires art • art reveals spirit • spirit changes the world

CITIES: CENTERS OF CULTURE & CREATIVITY

“The chief function of the city is to convert power into form, energy into culture, dead matter into the living symbols of art, biological reproduction into social creativity.” —Lewis Mumford





Winter 2022 • Issue No. 48

Christine Brooks Cote, Editor

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Artwork and writing submissions are welcome, provided they meet our specifications. Submission guidelines and upcoming themes may be found on our website.

Cover Images: [front] Lu Liu, *Urban Playground*; [back] Daniel Vorndran / DXR, Musée d'Orsay and the Pont Royal, 2014. Wikimedia Commons. (CC BY-SA 3.0)

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Note: The print edition of this journal shows many links that are live in our free digital edition. If you'd like to receive the digital edition, please sign up on our website.

www.stillpointartsquarterly.com

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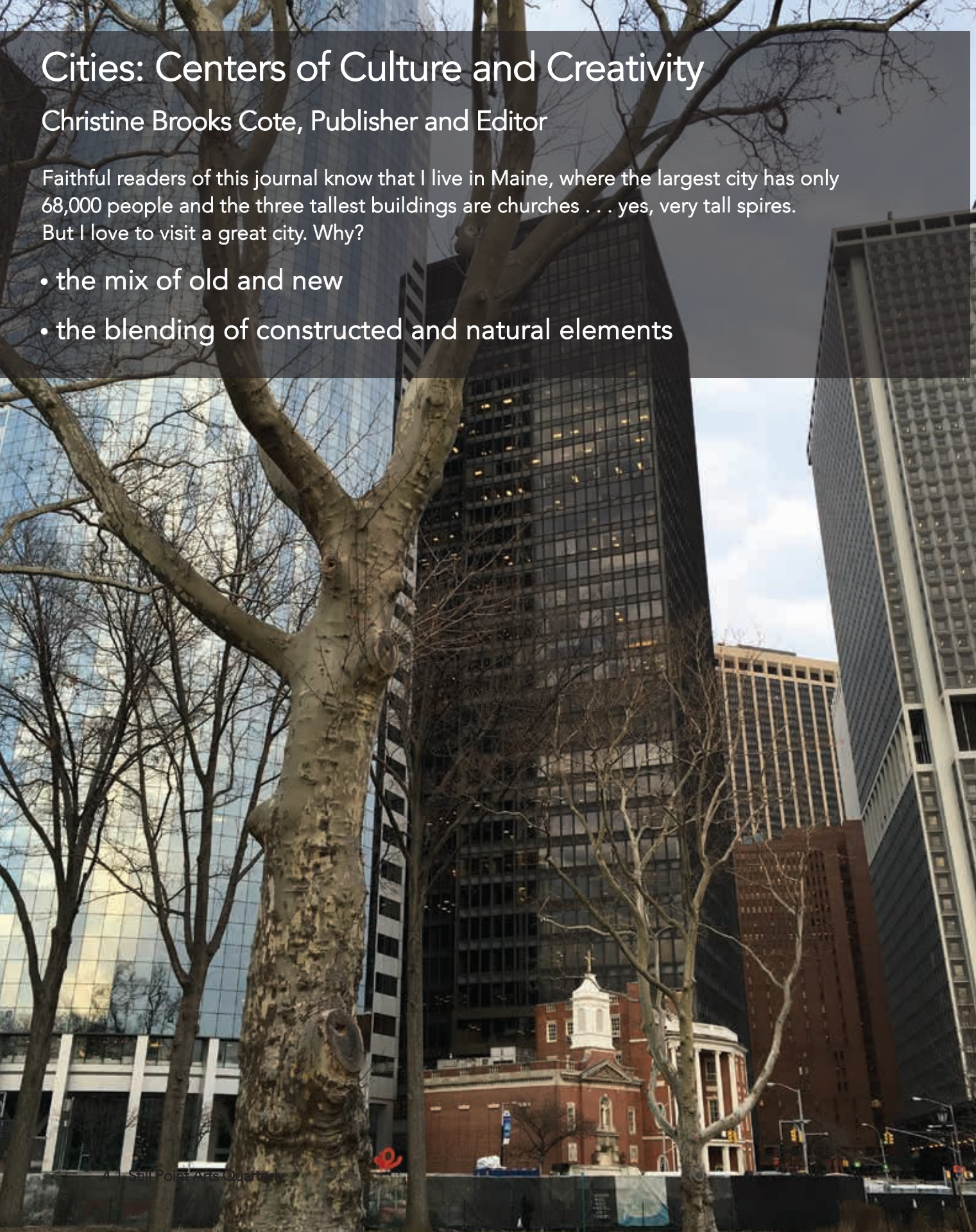
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Cities: Centers of Culture and Creativity

Christine Brooks Cote, Publisher and Editor

Faithful readers of this journal know that I live in Maine, where the largest city has only 68,000 people and the three tallest buildings are churches . . . yes, very tall spires. But I love to visit a great city. Why?

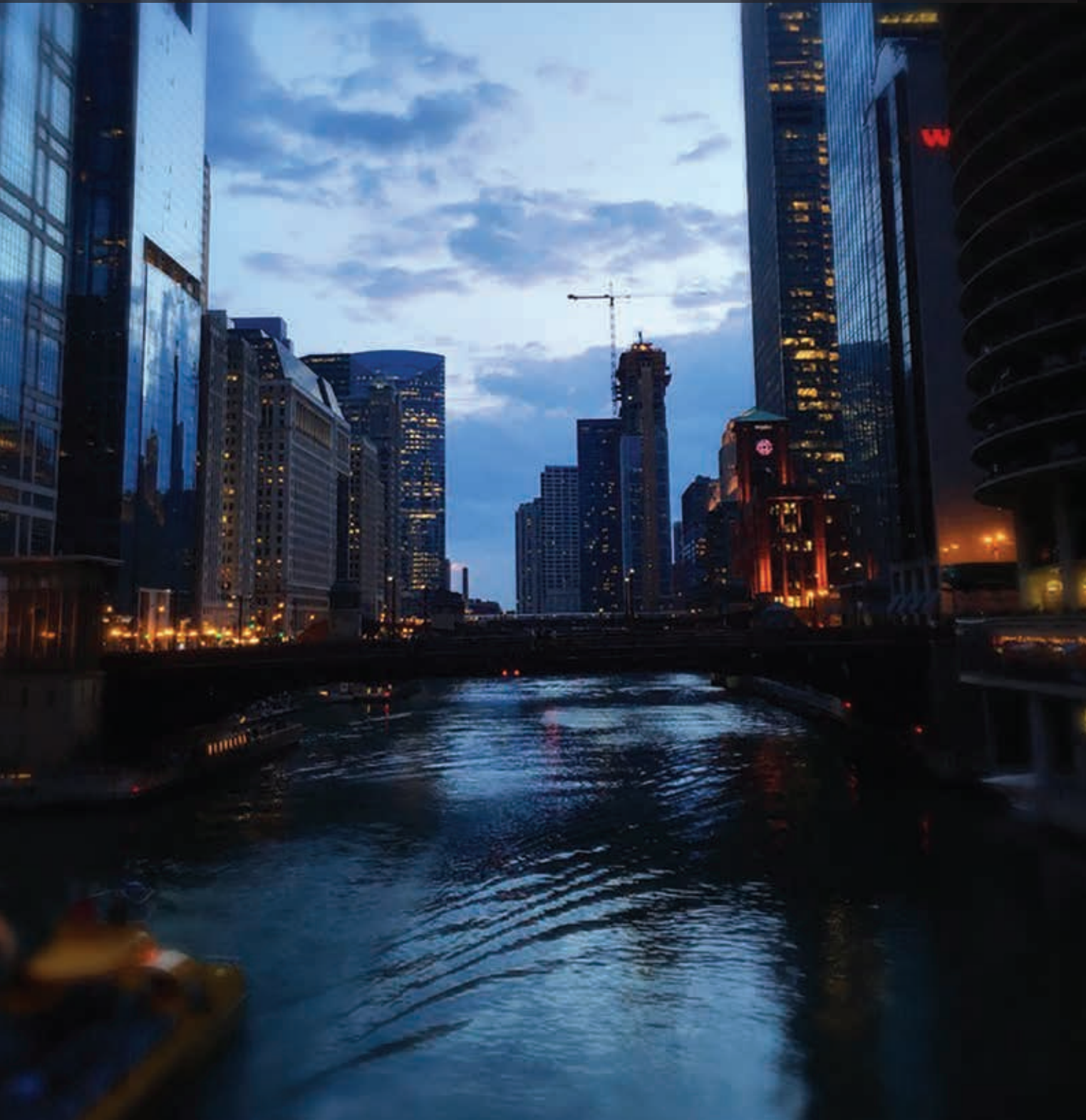
- the mix of old and new
- the blending of constructed and natural elements



- the lines, shapes, textures, contours, colors—usually overlapping
- the energy of people, lights, movement
- walking everywhere . . . or taking public transportation



- the cafes, restaurants, and coffee shops
- local foods . . . New York bagels, Chicago pizza . . .
- people watching, street entertainers, fashion

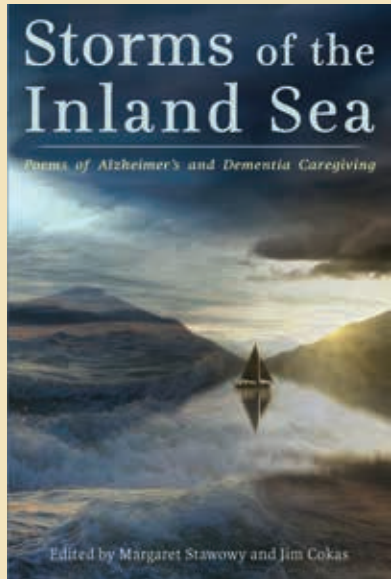


- the abundance of theaters, galleries, museums, and more
- the architecture . . . old and new
- getting to know what every city is famous for

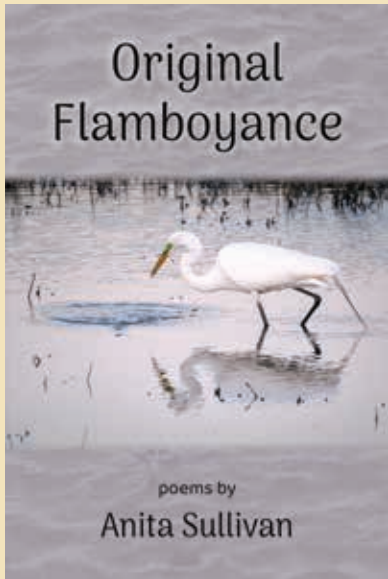


CHRISTINE BROOKS COTE founded Shanti Arts in 2011 to revel in nature, art, and spirit. She has called Maine her home for the last thirty years. • www.shantiarts.com | • www.christinecotephoto.com

SHANTI ARTS PUBLISHING



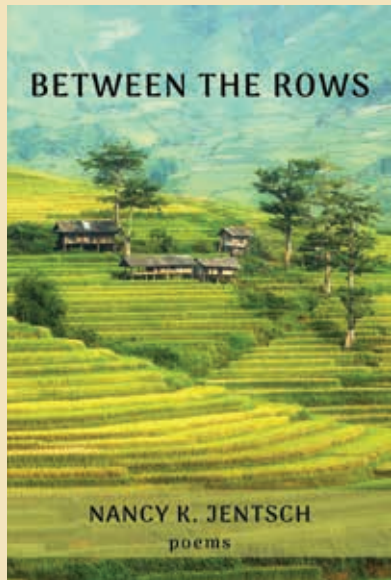
Storms of the Inland Sea
edited by Margaret Stawowy & Jim Cokas
poetry



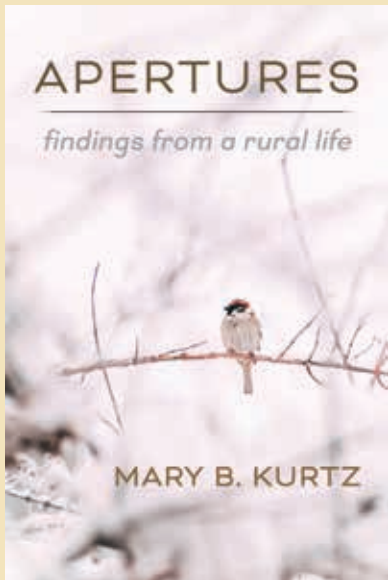
Original Flamboyance
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Root of Light
Michelle Doege
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Between the Rows
Nancy K. Jentsch
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Apertures
Mary B. Kurtz
memoir



Coming Home
Lori Vos
memor & spirituality

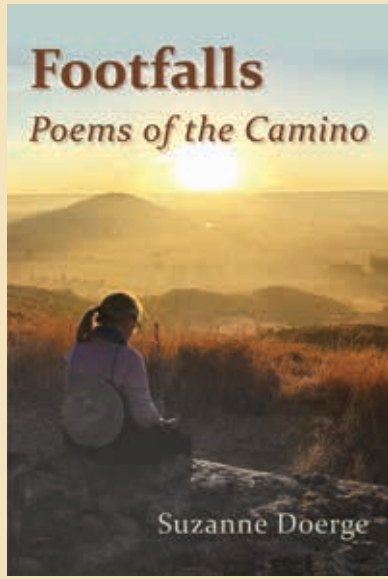
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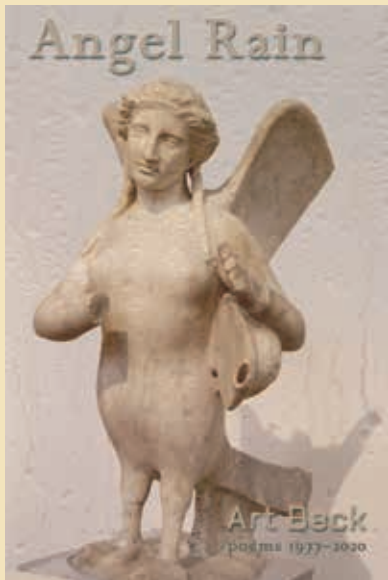
Magicicada
Kathleen Brewin Lewis
poetry



Sable and Selected Poems
Allan Johnston
poetry



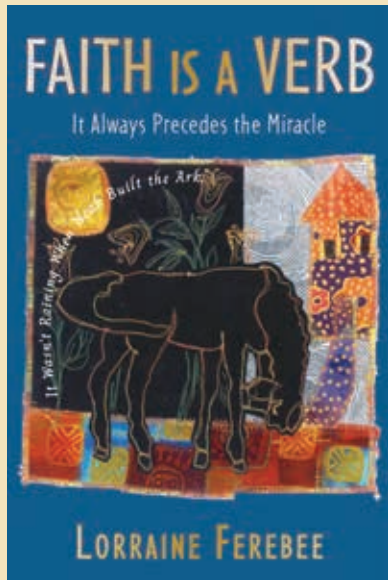
Footfalls
Suzanne Rogier Marshall
poetry



Angel Rain
Art Beck
poetry



Relics and Rituals
Tracy Ross
poetry



Faith Is a Verb
Lorraine Ferebee
memoir

FEATURED WRITERS AND ARTISTS

(42) LORI ARBEL is an artist and creative life coach, guiding others through personal journeys of self-discovery. She creates photographs and mixed-media art.

• www.loriarbel.com

(78) CARL BOON currently lives in Izmir, Turkey, where he teaches courses in American literature at Dokuz Eylül University.

(14) LORIN CARY is a photographer and writer.

• www.flickr.com/people/lorinleecary

(86) SUSAN CURRIE is a poet with a camera who documents life’s lyrical moments through her varied creative projects.

• www.susancurriecreative.com

(16) LAUREN CURTIS, a full-time artist and art teacher, enjoys working in a variety of media. She lives in New Jersey.

• laurencurtisart.weebly.com

(54) CAROLINE DE MAURIAC is a photographer, mixed media artist, and poet. She now resides near Brunswick, Maine.

• www.ieye.blog

(84) MJ EDWARDS is a multi-disciplinary artist. Living on an island in the Bay of Fundy, she finds that the natural world strongly influences the subject matter of her art.

• mjedwards.ca

(104) D DINA FRIEDMAN is a writer and activist enjoying the rural landscapes of western Massachusetts.

• ddinafriedman.com

(46) DAVID A. GOODRUM is a photographer and writer, whose work has been widely shown and published. He lives in Corvallis, Oregon.

• www.davidgoodrum.com

(128) JANE GOTTLIEB has been expressing her joy of art with paint, shapes, and color for her whole life. She lives in Santa Barbara, California.

• janegottlieb.com

(48) HANNAH GRACE GREER is currently studying creative writing at the University of Iowa.

• [@hannahggpoetry](https://twitter.com/hannahggpoetry)

(90) JOE HILLIARD is a writer, luddite, and teller of tales, and lives in sunny California.

(83) SUSAN CARROLL JEWELL used to write about architecture, but she has always written poetry.

(108) LU LIU is an artist who lives near Seattle, Washington.

(50) DEBORAH MCGILL is a photographer who lives in Maryland.

(112) DAVID MCVEY writes both fiction and non-fiction, and lectures at New College Lanarkshire in Scotland.

• www.david-mcvey.co.uk

(20) MITCHELL NEAR is a writer and student of art, architecture, music, and the psychology of dreams. He lives in San Francisco.

(98) ROSALIE SANARA PETROUSKE is an artist and writer. She recently won first place in the Poetry Box Chapbook Prize for 2022 for *Tracking the Fox*.

(52) ED RUZICKA, whose poems have been widely published, lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

(100) MARK SABA is a visual and literary artist, writing fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. He lives in Maine.

• marksabawriter.com

(60) KIMMEN SJÖLANDER is a writer and scientist, retired from the University of California, Berkeley. She now lives in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

• www.kimmen.amsterdam

(109) Nanci Stoeffler is an expressionistic artist who lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.

• www.stoefflerartstudio.com

(40) THEODOSIA A. G. TAMBORLANE is an abstract artist, illustrator, and poet. She lives in Dunedin, Florida.

• tamborlane.com

(44) JOANN TELEMDSCHINOW’s collages are influenced by her love of the art and architecture of the past, as well as travel, history, and mythology.

• joannimaginedpast.art.blog

(32) DWIGHT E. WATSON is retired from Wabash College, where he taught theater and humanities. He currently writes from his home in Hyde Park, New York.

(18) LINDA WOOLVEN’s work is characterized by her great love of color and texture and by the movement she creates in her paintings. She lives in Toronto, Canada.

• lindawoolven.com

(122) VIVIEN ZIELIN’s travels around the world are reflected in her short stories. Born in the United Kingdom, she now lives in San Francisco.

IMAGE CREDITS

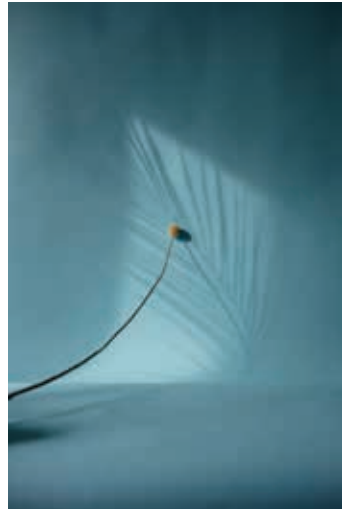
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(65) Jace Afsoon on [unsplash.com](#)
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(120) Jim Divine on [unsplash.com](#)
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t: top; m: middle; b: bottom; l: left; r: right

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SPRING 2023 ISSUE



Marina Leonova on [pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

Minimalist Wisdom

“Only this and nothing more.”

—Edgar Allan Poe

Selected artists and writers will have their work featured in the Spring 2023 issue of *Still Point Arts Quarterly*

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: January 1, 2023
for both writers and artists

FALL 2023 ISSUE



Chris Yang on [Unsplash](https://www.unsplash.com)

It's the Journey . . .

“It's the journey, not the destination, but that doesn't make sense until you get there.”

—J. R. Rim

Selected artists and writers will have their work featured in the Fall 2023 issue of *Still Point Arts Quarterly*

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: July 1, 2023
for both writers and artists

SUMMER 2023 ISSUE



Egor Vikhrev on [Unsplash](https://www.unsplash.com)
[Ekem at English Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekem)

Fires and Floods

“Will the fires and floods finally awaken us, turn our attention back to the living Earth? Or have we lost that connection, that place of belonging?”

—Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee

Selected artists and writers will have their work featured in the Summer 2023 issue of *Still Point Arts Quarterly*

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: April 1, 2023
for both writers and artists

FALL 2023 ISSUE



Ekrulila on [pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

Public Art | Street Art (visual, performing, literary)

“Street art is such a pure art form. It is so democratic. Art by anyone for anyone. It offers so much but asks for so little.”

—My Dog Sighs

Selected artists and writers will have their work featured in the Winter 2023 issue of *Still Point Arts Quarterly*

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: October 1, 2023
for both writers and artists



Lorin Cary
Trolley

Lauren Curtis



New York City Oneway



New York City Silverscapes

Linda Woolven



Downtown and Streetcar



City Reflections



Toronto Impression



The San Francisco Ferry Building on the Embarcadero with the Bay Bridge in the background

image info

Walking Through Time

by Mitchell Near

Asphalt. More asphalt. Concrete. More concrete. The sidewalk shrouded by a series of driveways. Where there are no curb cuts leading to garages, cars occupy every possible space, parallel parked and crammed into the linear limits of the curb. Where there are driveways, cars frequently park across the sidewalk, blocking the walking path. San Francisco, an American city, a California city, blithely set up for the convenience of the car.

It's February 1987. I've packed my sparse belongings and stuffed them into the trunk and back seat of my beat-up Volkswagen Bug. I've driven from San Diego to San Francisco, hoping to build a new life in a vibrant walkable city on the west coast. When I emerge on the north side of Golden Gate Park in the Richmond District, the only plant I see is a single scrawny ten-foot-high street tree struggling toward the sunlight on a block that stretches over two hundred feet. Not one planting bed, of even the smallest size, adorns the front facades of the row houses.

Somehow, I find a parking place, wedging my Volkswagen into the miraculous gap between two cars. I get out of my car and pull out the scrap of paper in my wallet with the address of my friend. I'd met Ken, a resident of San Francisco, when he visited my roommate, Richard, in San Diego. The three of us spent one evening drinking wine and conversing. Richard and Ken, both being therapists, were easy to talk to. I asked Ken if I could stay with him for a bit as I was planning on moving to San Francisco. He said yes.

I find the correct address, press the

San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906



buzzer and say hello to Ken over the intercom. He buzzes me in. I open the iron gate, walk up the hall-like stairway to his flat on the second floor. He stands in the open door frame of his flat, a wiry Asian man, midthirties, with black hair and glasses. He greets me with a smile and guides me into his place.

Nineteenth-century San Francisco was destroyed by the [1906 earthquake](#) and fire. After three days of urban inferno, little of the city remained standing. For the twentieth-century version of San Francisco, local developers followed a suburban pattern. They laid out streets with curb cuts, driveways, and garages, all in front, breaking the continuity of the sidewalk. They created a city where the vast majority of streets have no true pedestrian space.

Many neighborhoods in the older cities of the eastern United States were designed with alleys. Chicago's current network of alleys totals more than nineteen hundred miles. The alleys provide service spaces that include garages and trash bins. The sidewalks are continuous and pleasant places for pedestrians. You can walk down the sidewalk without being confronted by a driver pulling into or out of a garage or a car parked right over the sidewalk, creating a barrier like the Great Wall of China. You can enjoy the facades of the nineteenth-century row houses and not be visually assaulted by the gaping, blank-walled spaces of garages and the helipads of driveways.

San Francisco is a city of driveways. Or, more accurately, it is an American suburb, with the buildings crammed closely together, masquerading as a city.

image info

The Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989



October 17, 1989, 5:04 pm. The [Loma Prieta earthquake](#), magnitude 6.9, rolls through the San Francisco Bay Area in earthbound waves that shatter windows, topple buildings, and collapse freeway decks that moments before had floated above the earth in haughty disregard of the planet's power.

During the quake, I hold onto the side of the wide opening leading into my office on the sixth floor of a San Francisco financial district skyscraper. I'd probably be safer under my desk. Time itself slows down as the fifteen seconds of shaking seems to extend several minutes. I hear co-workers moaning in fear. One woman cries out, "Please stop!" The shuddering ceases and a female manager orders us out of the building. We all proceed in stunned silence down the stairway to Sansome Street.

Upon reaching the ground floor and stepping out of the building, I stand on the sidewalk and survey a bit of the damage done when plates of the earth collide. I see chunks of decorative plaster leaves descended from the Corinthian capitals of a neoGreco bank building on the corner of California and Sansome splayed on the sidewalk. Shards of glass litter the streets and sidewalks. I thread my way around impediments, walking south toward Market Street. "No power for the subway," I hear from a passing pedestrian. Okay, I'll walk home. Five miles to the flat I share with my girlfriend in Golden Gate Heights, about two hours to get there.

I walk west on Market with hundreds of other pedestrians. Despite the life-threatening earthquake of only minutes before, or perhaps because of it, there's a celebratory vibe in the air. Many people smile, some laugh, as we amble together down the

wide sidewalk, moving at a faster pace than the cars crawling down Market Street. Young men stand in the middle of intersections and direct traffic, voluntarily replacing the failed traffic signals.

After a mile of walking, I glance across the street to see water cascading in sheets down the inside of a five-story glass-clad building. I reach mid-Market, passing the entrance to the Civic Center subway station, yellow warning tape draped across the entryway. Several homeless people sit on the sidewalk, staring into the distance. A bit further on, I see a hand-printed sign in a shop window reading, “Bay Bridge Collapses!”

Another mile and I spy a pizza joint on Church Street a bit north of Market. I make a quick detour and walk into the restaurant. A middle-aged man stands behind the counter. I’m the only customer. “Sorry, buddy,” he says. “I’ve only got cold pizza.”

“I’ll take a slice,” I say and hand him some cash. I stand in the restaurant and eat my veggie pizza.

I return to walking west on Market. After another half mile, I pass Castro Street and climb the steep grade of upper Market. Halfway up the hill, I stop and turn to look out over the expanse of the city. Black curls of smoke rise from the Marina District. I wonder how extensive the fire below the smoke is. I turn around and begin walking the remaining two-and-a-half miles home, aware of the fragility and transience of the city.

•
The [San Francisco Ferry Building](#), built between 1892 and 1898, survived intact both the 1906 and 1989 earthquakes. For many years, it served as the visual anchor at the foot of Market Street, the portal into and out

of the city, as thousands of commuters arrived and departed each day via ferry boats. With the advent of the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge in the 1930s, Bay Area commuters turned their backs on travel by ferries, instead embracing the rise of the private automobile. In 1959, with construction of the Embarcadero Freeway and its double-decker roadway running directly in front of the Ferry Building, the city lost its connection to the majestic gateway that united the waters of the Bay with San Francisco’s main thoroughfare of Market Street.

The Embarcadero Freeway sustained extensive damage in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake and was closed to traffic. San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos spearheaded a campaign to remove the elephantine expressway that sliced through the city’s waterfront. A year of disputatious wrangling between those who saw the double-decker roadway as essential and those who perceived an opportunity to improve the city and reclaim a connection to the Ferry Building ensued. At last, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted six to five in favor of demolishing the freeway. The wrecking balls came out on February 27, 1991.

During that year of bickering, I walked by a stub of the dead freeway just north of Embarcadero Center, the 1970s-era modernist development of four slab-like office buildings, the tallest being the forty-five-story Four Embarcadero Center, fused with a three-level outdoor shopping mall. I stood in front of the freeway remnant, a dystopian vision, the ramp sheared off to reveal a roadway devoid of cars and supported by massive concrete columns, protruding into the Financial District—an empty fragment of mid-twentieth-century arrogance.

After the monster freeway was broken into bits and carted off into oblivion, the Ferry Building came back into view. We, the citizens and visitors of San Francisco, could once again see that grand portal at the end of Market Street at the edge of the Bay.

An extensive renovation of the Ferry Building proceeded in the late 1990s. The skylight above the grand nave, covered over in the 1950s with cheap ceiling panels, was revealed in all its glory. The Ferry Building Marketplace opened in 2004. Shops and restaurants celebrating local food culture populated each side of the arcade below the skylight. Tourists and locals strolled into shops selling shitake mushrooms, California olive oil, single origin chocolate, cranberry walnut bread, and wild Alaska salmon. Natural light illumined the arcade. Human voices drifted through the walkway. The conversations of the present merged with those of the past as life returned to the San Francisco Ferry Building.

•
My first year in San Francisco I explored the city on foot. I stayed with Ken for a few weeks, then rented a room in the outer Sunset, not far from the ocean. My Volkswagen Bug soon died. I paid \$20 to have it towed to a junkyard. I traversed the city on foot and in subways and streetcars.

I rode the L-Taraval streetcar downtown and disembarked at Powell or Montgomery or Embarcadero Station. I ambled up and over and down [Russian Hill](#), [Nob Hill](#), [Telegraph Hill](#). I walked past the mansions on Broadway in Pacific Heights, reveling in the view of the waters of the Golden Gate and the tawny-colored hills of Marin County.

I wandered about Fort Mason, a military fort reclaimed as a cultural center, its two-

story wood frame buildings enfolding art galleries, theaters, a music school, and exhibition spaces. Leaving Fort Mason, I walked past the boatyard of sailboats and motor launches, the water gently lapping at the hulls. I proceeded along the Marina Green, its verdant lawn framing a view of the Golden Gate Bridge. Wisps of fog slid past the bridge’s orange towers, a brisk breeze blew in off the water. I held onto my Panama Hat.

•
In 1864, Samuel Clemens worked as a beat reporter for the *Morning Call*, walking from one end of San Francisco to another, speaking with criminals, prostitutes, policemen, and theater-goers. As he trudged along the sidewalks and encountered the denizens of the city, he became Mark Twain, the archetypal American writer.

In 1921, Dashiell Hammett, employed as a Pinkerton detective, tailed suspects on foot, on foggy nights through the [Tenderloin](#), San Francisco’s neighborhood of crime and intrigue. His fictional private investigator, Sam Spade, walked the same streets as his creator, attempting to solve a puzzle where no one could be trusted.

In the 1950s, the dense, walkable San Francisco neighborhood of [North Beach](#) provided the backdrop for the beat poets to drink and converse and write. They imbibed cocktails and double espressos at Vesuvio Cafe, perused books at City Lights Bookstore, and read their poetry at the Coexistence Bagel Shop, ambling the short distances between the trinity of cafe, bookstore, and performance space.

Cities—where people walk and encounter friends and strangers, wander into bookstores and coffeehouses—engender



a sense of place. Art and life coalesce into a maelstrom of creativity.

•

It's 1999. I'm walking on 9th Avenue, up the hill, a few blocks south of [Golden Gate Park](#). I sense a hulking presence behind me. I turn around to see a man driving his car on the sidewalk, heading toward me at a slow speed. I'm not surprised. This is a city where people park their cars on the sidewalk. This is a city where people drive their cars on the sidewalk. I cross the street.

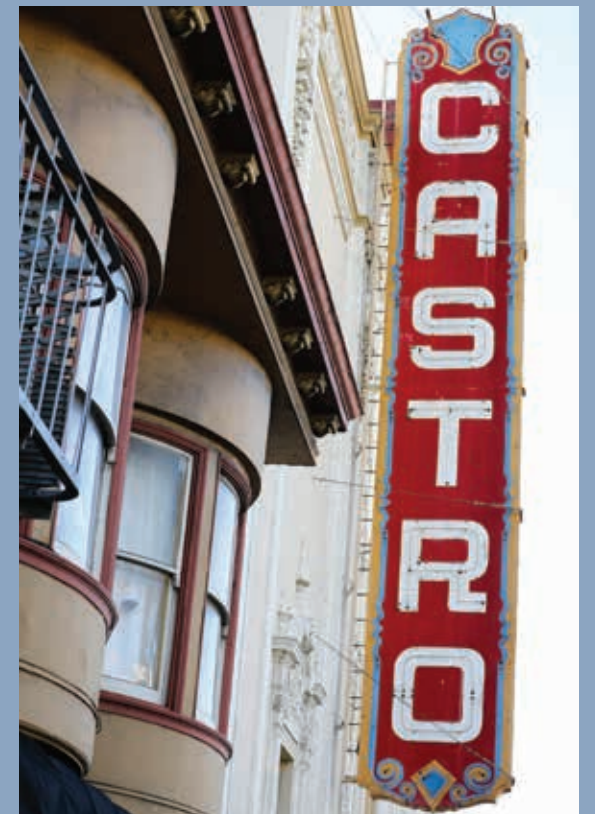
I'm on the board of directors for Walk SF, a pedestrian advocacy group. Four of us form a committee to fight sidewalk parking. We meet at the Thirsty Bear, a bar on Howard Street, and brainstorm ideas. Perhaps we can sue the city. We could find legal help and use the Americans with Disabilities Act as a fulcrum to reclaim the sidewalks. Nothing happens.

In the city of San Francisco, there are still tens of thousands of cars parked on the sidewalks day and night. The city tacitly allows this. Sure, you can call parking enforcement and complain, one car at a time, and a parking officer may or may not show up to ticket a car that may or may not still be parked on the sidewalk.

When Enrique Peñalosa became mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, in 1998, car owners parked their vehicles on the sidewalk with impunity. Mayor Peñalosa successfully banned cars from the sidewalks of Bogotá. He stated: "I was almost impeached for getting cars off sidewalks which car-owning upper classes had illegally appropriated for parking."

Walk in virtually any neighborhood of San Francisco and you will be confronted with cars parked on sidewalks, cars pulling into and out of driveways, and even cars driving on sidewalks. Drivers will blast through stop signs and red lights. Drivers will speed down

image info



residential streets. And, worst of all, drivers will hit pedestrians.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health reports that incidents of pedestrians being hit by cars is 30 percent higher here, on a per-walking-trip basis, than in all other locations in the United States. This is both a dangerous and unpleasant city to walk in. In Denmark's Copenhagen, Belgium's Ghent, Spain's Cordoba, cars have been banned from whole neighborhoods. The entire city of Venice is car-free.

I have walked in the center of Ghent, marveling at its collection of medieval buildings standing side-by-side along a canal. I have walked in the old Jewish quarter in Cordoba, delighting in the flowers displayed in terracotta pots hung on white-washed walls defining narrow cobblestone streets. I have walked on the streets of Venice, alongside neighborhood canals, relishing the gentle slosh of water and the bougainvillea spilling over garden walls. When I strolled the venerable and visually rich streets of those historic cities, a great weight was lifted from my shoulders. I could hear my thoughts and the reverberations of my footsteps. I emerged into plazas where people sat outside at small round tables to drink wine or coffee, to regale a friend with a story, to contemplate the sky as day slipped into night.

The cities of Europe are in the forefront of reclaiming streets for people. The cities of America remain places devoted to the storage and movement of cars.

•

It's 2021. I'm walking in the Forest Hill neighborhood, a few blocks from my house, on a crisp October morning, a bit past 7 am. I'm on Sotelo, looking at the barn-like expansive

house designed by the arts and crafts architect Bernard Maybeck just across the narrow street from me. Is that a dog? With no owner? No, it's a coyote, trotting down the middle of the street with an engaged look and tall ears. This is his, or her, street as well as mine. The coyote ignores me and moves through the early morning light with a silent dignity.

Coyotes now live in cities throughout America—Chicago, New York, San Francisco. Humans aren't killing predators as they did so rampantly in the past, and the coyote knows how to adapt to cities. They're not hunted here, and there are plenty of squirrels, pet food, and garbage to munch on. The main cause of death for coyotes in cities is being hit by a car.

We are not alone on this planet, whether we live in cities or small towns or rural areas. We share the earth with coyotes and falcons, mountain lions and owls. Our cities are human creations. At the same time, they are outcroppings of nature, in a sense no different than a termite mound or a beaver lodge or a bird nest. Bower birds build structures composed of sticks that form what can be construed as a foot-high pointed Gothic arch. The males build these bowers to court the females of their species. Beavers build lodges that contain dining areas. Termites construct mounds with ventilation systems consisting of tunnels that bring fresh air to an underground nest. Perhaps our skyscrapers, built with steel and glass and lobbies clad in marble, are no different than the mounds and lodges and nests created by our fellow animals.

•

As of 2018, according to the United Nations, 55 percent of humanity lived in cities. That



percentage is projected to increase to 68 percent by 2050. Tokyo, the largest city in the world, has a population of thirty-seven million. We cannot continue to devote the public space of our cities to cars. And the streets are public spaces—or at least they were at one time. Before the automobile colonized our streets, pedestrians shared the streets with horse-drawn carts, crossing where they desired and walking on the street. The streets may have been muddy, but they were unrestricted spaces, not dominated by cars. And, in many places, they are once again becoming public spaces where you can walk, bicycle, or hop on a tram or streetcar that glides down steel tracks.

The technophiles and many environmentalists envision a gadget-filled version 2.0 for the future of our cities. We will all have electric cars, and computers will drive those cars. That projected future is simply

another iteration of the car-based city. Instead of a city where cars aggressively dominate our public space, we can transform our cities. We can walk down quiet streets and converse with our fellow citizens. We can hear each other talk. We can hear trees rustling in the wind. We can hear American robins and white-crowned sparrows sing their dawn chorus. We can move about with a sense of ease, dropping the stressful vigilance we maintain to avoid the onslaught of cars.

The choice is ours. But, as one portion of humanity proceeds towards cities for people, not cars, another speeds along the highway of the status quo. We have an opportunity to transform our cities into places of joy and beauty and safety. Let us choose the walking and bicycling streets of Copenhagen as our role model, not the car-clogged horror of America's suburbanized cities. ❄️



Taipei, Taiwan



image info



An Intersection of Time

Dwight E. Watson



In the study of navigation, great circles divide the earth into two equal halves and are about 24,854 miles in length along meridians. Great circles represent the shortest distance between two points on Earth, as the bird flies. My flight was less direct and without symmetry; I came by jet.

I am in China, Nanjing, the southern capital, or as it is also called in the summer, one of the furnaces. Unlike the northern capital, Beijing, with over twenty-one million people, the southern capital is slightly more relaxed, you might say, with eight-and-a-half million, or thereabouts.

I stand at the broad intersection of Zhongshan and Guangzhou Roads, waiting for the light to change. Then I will make my way, walking on worn paving stones and sidewalks, passing alleyways, shifting right and left to stay on course. I will pass magazine stands plastered with tabloids wrapped in cellophane: *Ray li*, *Grazia*, and *Sports Illustrated China*; move to avoid repairmen who drill concrete, who make openings, crevices, asphalt “fistulas” that seem to appear one day and are gone the next; pass food vendors who attempt to reclaim the air from the malodorous with their sweet smells of *bāo* and *chá yè dàn*; and pass mothers carrying babies, bandaged, just released from Gulou Hospital, the hospital near the southern gate of Nanjing University where I teach. I will pass all of this, and much more, that is, once I cross the street.

In 98-degree heat and the 85 seconds I wait for the light to change, I strategically place myself in the middle of a crowd as they prepare to walk. I am told it is best to

cross the street with other pedestrians; you improve your chances of reaching the other side in their company. They don’t seem to mind; I guess there is comfort in numbers. A recorded woman’s voice is heard from a gray speaker attached to the post above my head: “*Xiàn zài shì hóng dēng*” (Now the light is red), but then, try as hard as I might, I lose the rest of her sentence. She seems to offer good advice about crossing, but I may be the only one at the intersection who is listening. Perhaps they don’t or can’t because of the competition for air space, the prolonged blare of horns, the thrashing sounds of motors, metallica, and metallico. Or maybe her voice is there to warn the blind and impaired and those like me who may be looking for some reassurance in a human voice, even if I do not understand all of her words.

I must cross four vehicular lanes and two more reserved for bikes to reach the other side. It is not the four lanes flooded with cars that worries me (although, I keep a watchful eye); it is the two broad lanes reserved for bicyclists and bikers, the ubiquitous e-bikes with lithium and lead batteries, mopeds and scooters that sneak up on you, that terrorize in silence, and their more aggressive motorized versions: gas motorcycles, 250cc choppers—the maximum cc allowed on many streets in China. The electric, battery, and combustibles join forces to present a clear and present danger to me and my pedestrian friends. Granted, they may not be your Harley “Hog,” but their sheer number make up for what they lack in size. Old, young, man, woman, they ride, wearing cotton masks to filter air or faceguards, which appear to be a lighter version of what a welder



might wear for protection. And still, they are helmetless and seemingly without expression, otherworldly. Like terracotta warriors on wheels, they dart with precision, weave in and out of narrow spaces, gutters, sidewalks, and any other means devisable for beating the traffic, maintaining place, edging and skirting others. Inexplicably, to me, they suddenly redefine the intersection and drive diagonally into the cross hairs of oncoming automobiles and buses. They are unconcerned; they are not afraid; and they have little to no regard for others on wheels, and “walkabouts” like me, well, we are a nuisance.

The two-wheeled bicycles and three-wheeled carts called *sanlunche* are equally persistent and numerous, but less threatening to those of us on feet; they seem unfazed by motorized vehicles. These bicyclists are in command of their chosen green mode of transportation, upright

and steady. Still, they ride in the wake of engine exhaust and New Age vehicles. I doubt they ride their pedal bikes because of environmental concerns or some deep-seated romantic longing for the nineteenth century. It strikes me that they might ride their simple bikes because they have no choice. And though they pedal with dignity, it must be hard to keep up, to keep pace, to move forward. I do not know what to make of it, the strain of navigation, the physical daily struggle it must take to get to work, or even to play, here, in megalopolis China.

Standing here, right now, at this intersection, I am also reminded of my privilege, and the ease and comfort of small town life, USA.

And I know I am far, very far from the first of our kind to be troubled at city crosswalks and maddening intersections. We all have been here, vulnerable and at risk. And so

there’s little surprise that researchers at Chinese schools of traffic and transportation, of automation, of mechanical and vehicular engineering publish studies on “traffic flow diffusion” with titles such as: “Bicycle and Pedestrian Arrival and Departure Characteristics at Signalized Intersections”; and this one, the “Study of Traffic Conflict Between Right-turn Vehicles and Non-motorized Traffic.” These earnest researchers use statistical methods to investigate traffic; they calibrate “bicycle saturation flow” and “pedestrian velocity,” and they conclude things like the “bicycle capacity has a negative linear correlation with the width of the approach.” I concur. It does, you bet it does. The intersection appears, to me, to be working its way to a definition of chaos, and I am doubtful that statistical methods and research alone will solve the problem and make sense of this confusion.

City management inspectors (police), I guess, in blue shirts and uniforms stand near the intersections, chatting with more of their kind, smoking cigarettes, and seemingly oblivious to the pending chaos that is taking or breaking shape here. What do they know that I don’t?

The light is about to change. So I step forward, off the curb, but I’m forced back because of one of those “right-turning vehicles.” Now, in conflict, I feel like “Ratso” Rizzo in *Midnight Cowboy*; I want to silence horns, slap the hood of that car, as well as a database of vehicular research, and yell, “I’m walking here, I’m walking here!”

There may be method to this madness, but in the meantime, as pedestrians, we wait.

•

When I was a boy, my dad took me to Ace Speedway, Alamance County, North



Carolina. Today, Ace Speedway is considered a premiere racing facility, a paved oval, 4/10ths of a mile, with 12-degree banks. It is viewed as one of the best NASCAR short tracks in the USA. Back then, it was a dirt track, 1/3 of a mile of hard Carolina red clay. The race was loud and intense while cars shaved layer after layer of dust off the track, kicking it thick into the air. I sat between my mother and father on rickety wooden bleachers. She, seemingly tortured by the event with her hands cupped over her ears the whole night, and he, taking in the race as if it were orchestral, watching the race as if it were a miracle, that something beautiful was taking place before his eyes. How could that be? How could he find music in all that noise? How could he find beauty in the spectacle of drivers dangerously trapped

in a circle, desperate to get ahead of one another? Clearly, he knew something that I didn't.

•

“Nǚshì men, xiānshēng men” (ladies and gentlemen), a recorded woman's voice announced each of the stops on the bullet train from Nanjing to Shanghai.

Once there, I saw the [Acrobatic Circus perform ERA: Intersection of Time](#), a remarkable production of light design and live music, gymnastics, juggling, and aerial arts. The last act, the grand finale, is called “Ball of Death.” The event takes place in a large globular metal cage, a great circle, a sort of three-dimensional ancient Greek theater acting space with fourteen latitudinal and three longitudinal lines of reinforcing metal

bars. With only one entrance, like the alien spaceship ramp in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, this “Ball of Death” swallowed not one or two but three, four, and then five motorcycles. These clean 250ccs entered the cage with centripetal force. All charged up like electrons around an atom, each pursued his own coordinates, each his own great circle, while crisscrossing, and miraculously missing one, the other, and then another. With the addition of each new motorcycle to the cage, the audience became more energized and consumed by the spectacle. We expressed shock and fear, and though we may not have wanted to admit this to ourselves, we were asking for more, more motorcycles, more orbits, more unbound energy—we wanted more—sacrifices. *Nǚshì men, xiānshēng men*, in a life that must compete day after day for

just a little space at the intersection, where better to find release, a catharsis, than in a performance of “Ball of Death.”

At the broad intersection of Zhongshan and Guangzhou Roads, near Nanjing University, there is more, much more. But to ask, “Where (or who) are the sacrifices?” may be a question best left unspoken. Here, they ride on all kinds—Flying Pigeons, Phoenix, Giants, bikes scraped together and custom made, Jin cheng, Ya di, Lifan, and all the imported models that are allowed. Many businesses depend on these bikes as the most effective means for transporting supplies down city streets jammed with traffic. They all ride, it seems, without regulation but clearly with the spirit of Archimedes by their side. They deliver and retrieve, redefine the center of mass, of gravity, loaded down with every conceivable shape and

type of object: building materials, discarded appliances and new ones, overstuffed bags, Styrofoam and plastics, laundry, electronics, Pizza Hut and KFC, and boxes strapped and stacked five high and three wide, they all ride. At the end of the work day, they are, it seems, slightly more relaxed, but no less astonishing. They return often with two, three, and sometimes four people on one bike—an infant tucked behind the front leg shield of a scooter, a child clinging to the back of his father and between the legs of his mother. They ride backwards, side-saddle, text, talk, crochet, play video games, and even sleep as the driver works the city streets. And they do. They work it. They all do. They ride the currents of crowded streets as if they have special vision. They detect the most subtle change in traffic to fill a gap. And as I have come to understand the first principle of navigating, riding, or walking the streets of China, if you are the “first to fill a gap on a particular piece of tarmac, then that gap is rightfully yours.”

Still (and I can hear my father agree) a “piece of tarmac” is a harsh reality, and “gaps” are fleeting. Or to borrow a phrase from the poem, “Hard Roads in Shu,” by Li Po (701–762), the brilliant Chinese Taoist poet, “Such traveling is harder than scaling the blue sky.” As far as I can tell, there is little “road rage” in China, in Nanjing. Instead, unrattled by the masses, there is a quiet persistence, or perhaps, it’s a resignation, a temperament and a sentiment, a spirit of humanity that is deeply felt but contained within. And yet, it is busy, so very busy!

Writing 1300 hundred years ago, Li Po’s “hard roads” were the formidable trails of the Green Clay and Great White Mountains, where the highest crag is “barely a foot above heaven,” and through the dangerous Dagger-

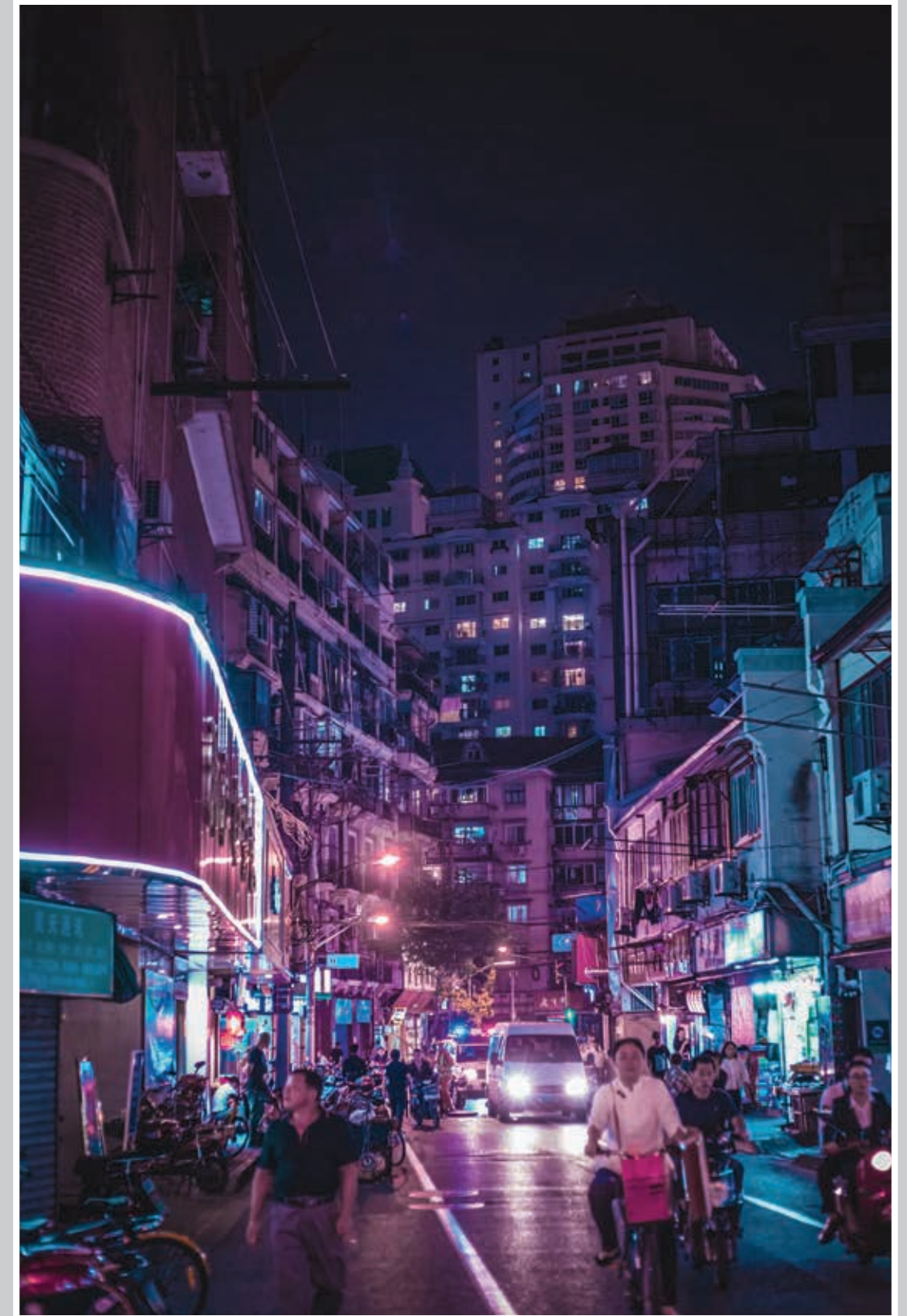
Tower Pass to fear “ravenous tigers” and “venomous reptiles.” “With their teeth and fangs ready / to cut people down like hemp.” “With all this danger upon danger,” he asks, “why do people come here who live at a safe distance?” This is more than a reasonable question, even if you weren’t a Taoist. Why struggle when you do not have to? Why put up with the hardship of navigating unfriendly terrain and feelings of alienation? But, then, again, what is a “safe distance?” What does that mean? Is it something that we can study and know like “traffic flow diffusion?” Is it something we can calibrate or record like “bicycle saturation” and “pedestrian velocity?” If I study the mountain from afar, at a “safe distance,” I will be inclined to study its profile, and I will learn much about its relational composition with the elements around it. If I study the mountain from within, I will move from composition to storyboarding, taking my own pictures to help create a story.

At the intersection of Zhongshan and Guangzhou Roads, most have no choice but to help create the story. And what a story it is, old and new, rich and poor, brilliant and confusing.

Xiàn zài shì hóng dēng. The light is red, and traveling is hard, and while Li Po might choose comfort and safety over the hardship of travel, he does not deny the traveler a chance at “scaling the blue” sky. Indeed, they are doing it here in the gaps of Zhongshan and Guangzhou, and in the acrobatic imagination, a moving human pyramid, a ballet of bikes at the intersection of time.

The light at the intersection of Zhongshan and Guangzhou is now green, and the woman’s voice in the gray box is silent. It is time for me to walk. Or maybe, it is time for me to mount and ride. ❀

image info





Theodosia A. G. Tamborlane

CITYSCAPES I, II, IX

"Color and movement are the soul of my abstract paintings. Colors, lines, and forms are brought together in an interdependent dialogue on canvases and fabrics both large and small."

"The coalescence of my internal feelings and external forces allows me to express many thoughts and ideas in dynamic, abstract terms."



Lori Arbel



Deconstruction Reconstruction



Direction

JoAnn Telemdschinow



La Maison Rose, Paris

“I seek to make my work both visually appealing and expressive of a specific mood or atmosphere. I love to travel and take pictures of the places I visit. I’m very fond of the city of Paris. It’s full of beautiful art and architecture. These photos capture some of its lovely and atmospheric scenes.”



Hotel de Ville, Paris



Menilmontant, Paris



David A. Goodrum

A photographer and writer, David A. Goodrum lives in Corvallis, Oregon.

“My artistic vision has always been to create a visual field that momentarily transports you away from hectic daily events and into a place that delights in an intimate view of the world. Over the past couple of years, I have focused my time more on what is underfoot, hidden away, ignored, desiccated, and/or rarely considered subject matter for photography. In the quickness of our modern lives, we often lose the small details as we step over them, look away, stare straight ahead, distract ourselves with devices. Instead, these photos are from experiences of pausing and contemplation.”

Vienna 2011

I don't remember
an exact moment
I remember Vienna,
the city where —
my great-grandfather waltzed

A city of —
whipped cream and gold,
arched windows of warmth,
click clacking streets with —
strangers sitting next to
those lonely,
the soup restaurant
packed and filling

Dozens of others visited,
Bavaria —
with its beech and spruce,
doll-house homes, and
storybook streets
Waterford and Killarney,
with umbrella-flipping rain
dark-warm pubs, rescuing villagers,
and the desire to return one day
Lyon, the most loved
with its ambiance of Rome,
friendly doors —
eclairs eaten, coco dripping

But it was Vienna,
that planted the dream
the first feeling of —
home

by Hannah Grace Greer



image info



COMESTIBLES
FINOS
IMPORTACIÓN
DIRECTA
DE LAS PRIMERAS
MARCAS MUNDIALES

LABORATORIOS DE CONFITERIA
Y
PASTELERÍA
BOMBONERÍA SELECTA
OBJETOS PARA REGALO

ROCAFORT
SUCESOR
MASS

GALETES
DOLÇOS
XOCOLATES



PRODUCTES
DE
QUALITAT

LA CURE
GOURMANDE

Deborah McGill
Window Shopping

1972

I went back to Racine this year.
Nothing was the same. Even the alleyways were clean.
Mops stood propped just-so against brick walls
beside the steel-reinforced back doors
of shops stuffed with a thousand ticket items.

Toyotas Hondas, Subarus in forty different sheens
idled at red lights. Drivers nudged their gas pedals,
nosed on down the ave. Lawns shone emerald
and the porches seemed roomy, well ordered.
Hell’s bells, I don’t even remember porches.

I didn’t hear one jack-legged, fool-child
with an overhead cam gun up Washington St.,
screech to a halt, lay rubber when the light changed,
smoke pouring backward out of a cracked window.
I had to drive around and around to find suet,
chimneys, factory grime, and rusting chain link.

At least no one leered. At least there were no catcalls
to the walking, working girls that once headed to factory jobs
or walked in to waitress at some hole-in-the wall
that served liverwurst, corned beef, cokes, and sorrow.

Still, I miss the whole mess terribly. Mostly
how we were together talking up Dostoevski,
Rimbaud, Leonard Cohen, and tossing back shots,
laughing, flipping LPs on the stereos—that jolt
and hiss of the needle as it first found its groove—
laughing, dancing in and out of shadows
at barrooms where the customers blew in out of February.

Men in plaid woolen coats whose tongues were crippled
except when they talked about carburetor or quarterbacks
and plain women whose laps were full of the earth.
Women who forgave the men because they had little choice.
Forgave them for the sake of lust. Women who swore
like the men and men who swore about everything
because swearing was the first trigger they had for their feelings.

We lived there, all of us, three winters, in the thick of it,
determined to balance out all we saw that was wrong
and all we saw that was right. We saw so much, read,
drank, danced, and, likewise, cursed the half of it.

by Ed Ruzicka



image info



Kingston Theatre—Cheboygan, Michigan

Caroline de Mauriac

Cheboygan, Michigan

Caroline de Mauriac—photographer, mixed media artist, and poet—originally hails from central Maine. After living throughout New England and the Midwest then traveling widely, she now resides near Brunswick, Maine. She retired following a career working in museums and environmental organizations and operating her antiquarian book business. She shows in numerous galleries in Maine, and her work appears in various art and literary journals.

An anthropologist, Caroline focuses on themes that consider the lives of ordinary people. She is interested in both physical and cultural landscapes. Small cities are a rich source of inviting store fronts that are energized with classic graphic design.

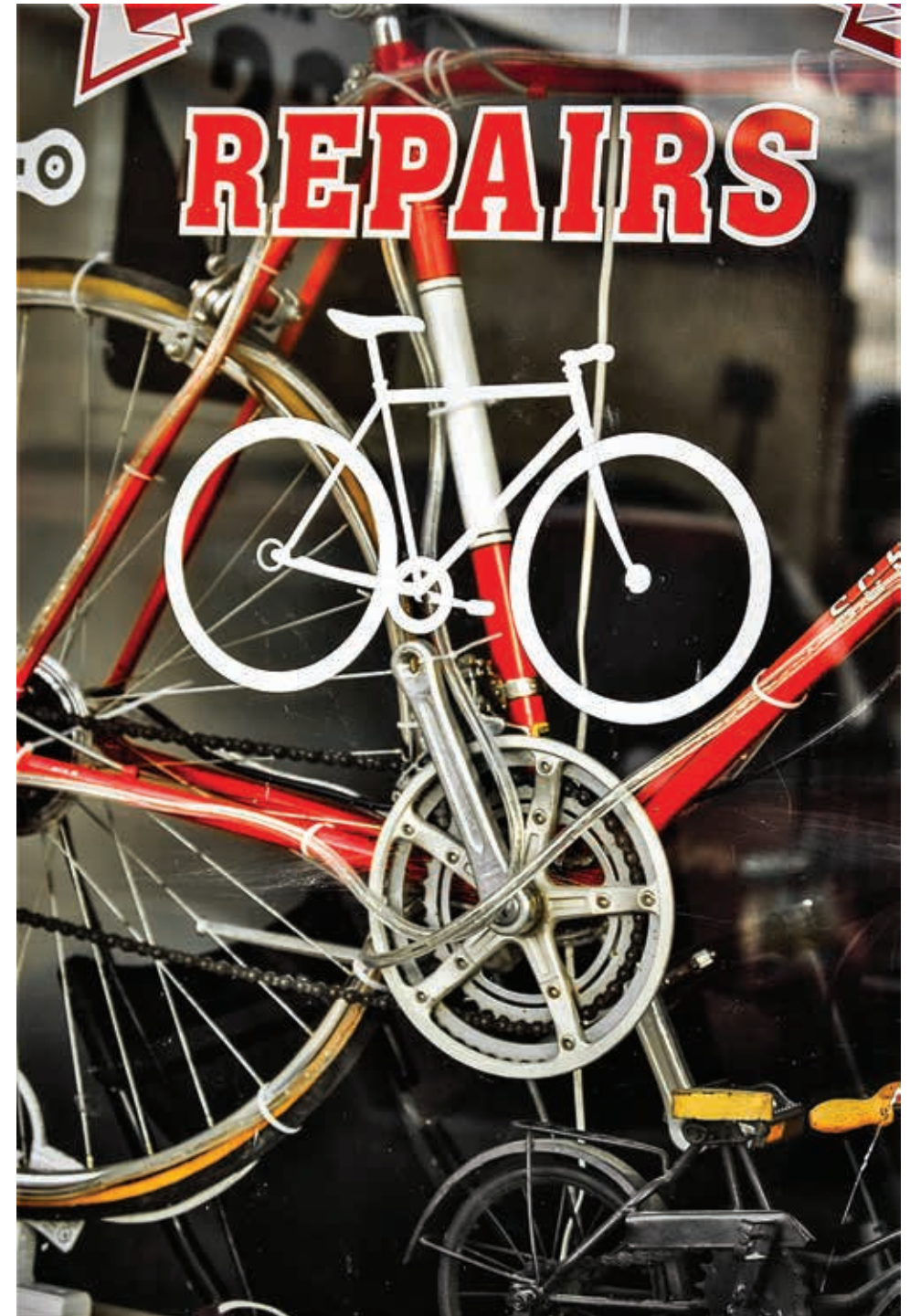
This selection of photographs from Cheboygan, Michigan, depict gathering places, services, and entertainment venues that express a sense of tradition and community vitality.



Linde Furniture—Cheboygan, Michigan



City Barber Shop—Cheboygan, Michigan



Repairs—Cheboygan, Michigan



The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse

"The Country Mouse stopped in the Town Mouse's den only long enough to pick up her carpet bag and umbrella.

"You may have luxuries and dainties that I have not,' she said as she hurried away, 'but I prefer my plain food and simple life in the country with the peace and security that go with it."

Aesop and Doña Flor

Kimmen Sjölander

Doña Flor dos Guimarães, professor of the culinary arts in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, had a problem: her dead husband's ghost. Vadinho had brought her more trouble back in his in-the-flesh days than a woman could bear, spending more time at the casino and in brothels than with his wife, but when he returned home and crawled into bed with her, Flor turned into a fount of forgiveness. Vadinho might have been a cad, but he was a wizard between the sheets. And didn't the Bible say love covered a multitude of sins?

After her husband's death at only thirty-one, Flor mourned while her mother rejoiced. But celibacy didn't suit the lovely widow. Her second husband, Teodoro, was a respected pharmacist and a gentleman; in other words, Vadinho's total opposite. Teodora was also, quite unfortunately, Vadinho's opposite in bed. From the torment of her marriage to Vadinho, to her desolation after his death, to the disappointment of married life to a

truly decent man who so clearly adored her: poor, poor Flor. And then one day Vadinho returned: naked, ready, and willing. "You rang, Madam?"

I paraphrase. The ghost didn't say exactly that, but he did make his intentions clear.

What's a woman to do when her husband's ghost offers to satisfy her in ways her new husband can't, but her religion condemns adultery? If you've seen the 1976 film *Doña Flor and Her Two Husbands* or read the novel by Jorge Amado, you know how it turned out for our conflicted heroine. Some girls have all the luck!

All of us face conflicting needs throughout our lives, even if these are not the kind confronting Flor. To marry or remain single, to have children or not, to take a demanding job or seek work-life balance; these decisions, and a host of others, define in significant ways the trajectories of our lives. Of these, choosing between city life and life in the country might not seem

particularly momentous (and it's easier to change one's abode than one's spouse) but it colors and molds our day-to-day lives in profound ways.

The question of city or country goes back millennia. Aesop's fable of the country mouse and the city mouse favors country life, and if you follow surveys of where people hope to live in retirement, you'll find huge numbers voting for the countryside. But for every person leaving New York City for a home in the Hudson Valley, and every Thoreau seeking solitude and nature, there are folk making the opposite journey. People can be compelled to live in a city for work, but cities can also exert a peculiar magic that draws people to them, despite all the things that can, and do, go wrong whenever large numbers of people crowd into a small space. Like Doña Flor forgiving Vadinho his many faults, we can ignore all the warts of city life, from higher rents and outrageous real estate costs to noisy neighbors and

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I've been obsessed with this question most of my life. As a child growing up in a United Nations village in Queens, surrounded by people from different countries, my primary fantasy when I reached my early teens involved being a painter or a writer living in Paris, ideally in a garret, and spending hours in cozy cafes looking out at the rain. My secondary fantasy (undoubtedly spurred by Kim Darby's to-die-for leather gauchó pants in *True Grit*, the 1969 John Wayne film) placed me high in the mountains somewhere, living on a ranch and riding horses. I did, in fact, end up having a close semblance of the Parisian life I'd imagined, although most of it took place in Manhattan's East Village and San Francisco, with only a few weeks in Paris. I never lived in the mountains, but my seven years in Santa Cruz surrounded by redwood forests and minutes from the Pacific coast satisfied the spirit of that fantasy. But from the branches of the sycamore trees where I perched as a child plotting my future life, I never saw myself living in a suburb where the only cafes would be in strip malls and most of these cafes would be Starbucks, never mind the fact that there were no Starbucks back when I was a pipsqueak daydreaming halfway up an itchy-ball tree.

My soothsayer skills are clearly limited, because I ended up spending two decades in exactly such a suburb. (I also never imagined that my first marriage would end in divorce, leaving me at thirty-two with three children, one year of college, and no marketable job skills beyond waitressing and light office

work, providing yet more evidence against any claims I might have made back then about my psychic abilities, but that's another story.)

As suburban towns go, Lafayette wasn't bad. Originally home to the Miwok and Ohlone tribes, the land itself is exquisite: hilly, criss-crossed with streams, and covered with trees. It is protected by the Berkeley-Oakland hills to the west from the fog that covers much of coastal California every summer. For the climate alone, I might have wanted to live in Lafayette. The pretty downtown is filled with posh shops, nice restaurants, and perfectly groomed people. The small house I managed to buy was about two miles from the downtown, near the top of a hill, with panoramic views of the hills to the west. Nevertheless, every time I returned from a trip I had to pull out the Benadryl.

People obviously choose to move to the suburbs but not normally in order to fulfill a childhood dream. Suburban life is a practical choice when one's job is in a city, but there are children to consider. I had a job offer in Oakland, but the public schools were problematic, and I couldn't afford private schools. In California, where property taxes fund K-12 education, that basically meant a posh suburb.

Real estate in the San Francisco Bay Area is absurdly expensive these days, but in 1997, when I was driving around looking at for-sale signs, prices were reasonable, especially for small run-down homes that needed a lot of work. I didn't care about the ratty carpeting and the broken glass in the mirrored closet doors, and I had no idea the deck was rotting and the roof would need to be replaced, and that the previous owner had done his own electrical work—I was bewitched by the views and the seclusion.

Two years later, I met and married a

British physicist. We replaced the deck and the roof and fixed the wiring and the plumbing and continued to ignore the broken mirrors on the closet doors. In the middle of all those renovations and repairs, I got a tenure-track faculty position at the University of California, Berkeley, and for years I was too busy to think straight about anything but getting tenure and keeping the grant money coming in and university politics and taking care of my children and keeping my husband happy to even think about taking some time for myself. That lasted until I had two cancer scares and discovered the curious ability of a brush with mortality to put things into perspective.

Previously, I'd only questioned where I was living; now, I began to question every aspect of my life. My sixty-to-seventy-hour workweeks made it hard to stay on top of regular medical checkups—things like mammograms—much less getting to the gym regularly. Suddenly, Seneca's essay "The Brevity of Life" was making all too much sense. I wanted time to walk in the hills, to have long talks with friends, to finish the novel I'd started writing, to read more books, to pull out my easel and guitar. Unfortunately, none of that quality-of-life stuff was consistent with the productivity required of me by the university. Slowing down—working perhaps only forty hours a week—wasn't an option. I knew what my colleagues called fellow professors whose publication rates slowed or grants dried up: *deadwood*. It didn't matter if you already had tenure; they could make your life so miserable that you'd voluntarily leave. I knew faculty who had gotten to that point.

My feelings about suburbia, at least the version I was living in, reminded me of the problems inherent in interdisciplinary

research. I'd gotten my PhD in computer science and was working in computational biology, but as far as most of my colleagues in the computer science and life sciences departments were concerned, I was neither fish nor fowl. To the computer scientists, my work was too applied to be respected; life scientists, meanwhile, expected a certain level of experimental lab work instead of the machine learning algorithms and databases my group developed. Suburbs were like that: they provided neither real countryside nor city life. And because so many residents commuted long distances to San Francisco and Silicon Valley, our charming suburban town also lacked much of the close-knit neighborliness of small towns.

In fact, many of the reasons I wanted to leave were buried, and it was only after I'd been gone from that world for a year or two that I came to understand what was going on inside.

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After my second cancer scare, I decided it was time to take a step back and applied to take a year's sabbatical. The official sabbatical proposal I submitted said I'd spend the first semester visiting universities around Europe and choose one university for a collaboration in computational biology (my research area) in the second semester. It was all a ruse. My actual research plans were unlikely to get the dean's stamp of approval as they involved looking for the next place my husband and I might live. My husband's job gave him limited vacation, so I was mostly on my own.

Everywhere I went during that first half of my sabbatical, from small villages in the south of France to major capital cities, I took notes. I went looking for what

Ray Oldenburg calls "third places" in his book *The Great Good Place*—meeting places where newcomers can be integrated into a community. I struck up conversations with people in cafes and restaurants and got myself invited to parties.

In a small village not far from the one made famous by Peter Mayle in *A Year in Provence*, I was befriended by a cluster of Parisian women who had decided to flee city life. In the week or so I stayed there, I became enamored of the close-knit community they'd formed, the fields of lavender and ancient olive trees. I began to look at real estate listings. A week later, at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, a young postdoc from a small village in South America told me she preferred the anonymity of city life. In villages, she said, everyone knows your business. Anonymity wasn't high on my wish list, but villages in the countryside, it seemed, might not be exactly right, no matter how bucolic. And besides, that adorable village didn't have a single bookstore, cinema, or ethnic restaurant, and although I really liked French people, French culture, and speaking French, I wanted to live in a much more diverse society. I went back to focusing on cities.

As a scientist, I wanted to be near a research university, but another part of me—the part that remembered my years in New York City—was becoming increasingly vocal about access to culture: concert halls, museums, theaters, cinemas, bookstores, and so on. And of course another part lobbied to live in the countryside.

I began to fantasize about a home where the front door opened onto the center of a major capital city, something like Paris or Amsterdam or London, but with cozy neighborhoods for village-like community,



and the back door opened onto pristine wilderness. I was looking for the impossible, but that didn't stop me from trying.

Near the end of the first half of my sabbatical, I grew tired of the constant traffic and cigarette smoke in Paris and hopped on a train to Amsterdam. I'd been to Amsterdam before and loved it, but this time I was looking at it differently.

There have been a small number of times in my life when I have fallen in love with a place, bonded to it with the intensity of romantic love. Parkway Village, the United Nations village where I grew up, is one. The next place I loved was Santa Cruz, the beach town surrounded by redwood forests where I went back to school post-divorce and forged a new life. And then Amsterdam.

Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands, but it's really a small city; you can walk across the center from one side to the other in under an hour, and because there are very few cars, it's surprisingly quiet, and you're mostly dodging bicycles. Outside the tourist center, I discovered, Amsterdam is composed of a number of small villages, each with its own local color, traditional brown cafes, farmer's markets, and shops. It's hard to beat culturally, with everything from classical music concerts to world beat and jazz, opera, theater, and ballet, with numerous open-air festivals in the beautiful parks. And I don't have to tell you how beautiful it is.

In short order, I rejected London, Stockholm, Barcelona, Rome, Paris, and Montpellier and decided I wanted to return

to Amsterdam for the second part of my sabbatical. That left finding a place to stay. On the second or third day, I wandered into a little women's clothing shop on a canal and struck up a conversation with the owner. Did she happen to know of any apartments for rent, starting in January? She did, in fact. She owned the two apartments above the shop, and one would be available in January. Did I want to see it? I did.

A few weeks into the second half of my sabbatical, after I'd moved into the little apartment above the shop and found a cafe that I loved and had started writing again and had begun to make friends, I called my husband and told him I wanted us to give up our jobs and move to Amsterdam. Not then, of course, but in a few years. He thought I was joking.

Nigel came out for a three-week vacation, which we divided between Amsterdam and Portugal. Just before he headed back to San Francisco, he said he thought Amsterdam was quite a nice city, and of course it was fun to see Portugal, but I really needed to be sensible.

Just before I returned to California, I sat in my kitchen watching the results of the United Kingdom referendum on membership in the European Union. Afterwards, I called my husband. The clock was ticking; if we wanted to live in the EU, we'd need to do that soon. By then he knew I was serious, but he still thought I was being silly.

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Returning to the Bay Area after spending most of the previous year in Europe was a bit jarring, and yet, as much as I fantasized about living somewhere else and living differently, I was at least a decade away from normal retirement age for a Berkeley professor (tenured faculty can, and do, work well into

their seventies), and I wasn't quite ready to step down. I loved teaching and research, and almost everything about being an academic. That didn't stop me from kvetching about the hours, the departmental and university politics, and the sexism, of course. It did, however, stop me from taking action.

But there was a part of me that wasn't happy with the status quo, and it began to be a bit of a nuisance. It nagged at me day and night. I began to see it as a scrawny thing, perhaps six or seven years old, the smaller sister of a pair of twins. The larger twin, obviously, was the scientist-academic. From the runt's perspective, she'd gotten a raw deal when I put all my eggs in the science-and-academia basket almost thirty years earlier. I was thirty-two, with three children, including two-year-old twins, when I decided to leave my first husband, and I had a plan: return to school, get a PhD, and become a professor. Computer science was a practical choice: if I couldn't complete a doctorate, at least I'd be able to get work. At the time I decided to go back to college, the artist-twin was actually bigger and stronger than her sister, but she was put in a box on a shelf, and all the resources went to the other twin. Almost thirty years later, the artist-twin was a shriveled thing, and the scientist-academic was in control. Naturally, they bickered all the time.

The artist twin wanted to stop letting academia consume all the time and energy, and she wanted to move to Amsterdam. *Remember the short stories we wrote?* she'd say. *Remember the beautiful park we walked through every day to get to the cafe, with the swans and the ducks and the green parrots?* She liked it there.

The academic sister, of course, wasn't going to just shut up and go away. *You're*



being totally illogical, she'd say. First of all, it's too late for you to do anything particularly impressive, and anything less than awesome would be totally embarrassing.

Where is it written that I have to be a super-star? the scrawny artist-sister would reply. *What do you expect of me, that I'll emerge fully formed like Athena from the head of Zeus? That's not fair. Artistic skill takes time to develop. Anyway, this idea about having to be at the top is your value system, not mine.* (And then, quietly, I heard her say she just wanted a chance to play, and was that really so ridiculous?)

The scientist-academic sister would roll her eyes at these arguments. *What planet*

do you live on? Be practical. From a financial perspective alone, it makes absolutely no sense. Every year we stay at Berkeley, our pension will increase.

At this point the runt twin would practically be in tears. *How long am I supposed to wait? Have you forgotten what Seneca wrote? Neither of us has any idea how long we'll live.*

And then she would turn to me and say this was like submitting a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation and having it shot down because she didn't have preliminary results to convince them that she would succeed. It wasn't fair! First she was starved, and then she was criticized



for not being an Olympic athlete. She would point her skinny finger in my face. Wasn't I the mom? Didn't I get to choose who got funded? The scientist-academic sister had gotten all the funding for decades. It was her turn now. It had to be!

The arguments went on like this, day and night. It got really tiresome.

My husband, for his part, was perfectly happy with our lives in California and was far from convinced about moving to Europe. He liked his work, and his golf buddies, and playing squash, and our home. He was not a man who liked change, and the change I was asking for wasn't trivial.

But another development changed the dynamic: Donald Trump's presidency. In the fall of 2018, Nigel and I left the keys to our house with my youngest daughter and headed to the airport for a new life in Amsterdam.

Our life in Amsterdam has been so different from the life we left behind, for all sorts of reasons—retiring, the pandemic, living in a new city in a new country, etc., etc.—that my life pre-Amsterdam feels like it occurred on another planet. The fact is, Amsterdam has a very different vibe from other cities. Amsterdam is an outlier even in comparison with other Dutch cities, and it both attracts a different kind of person and fosters a different way of being.

Visually and sensually, we live in a very different place than anywhere I've lived before. Our apartment is on a tiny island in a cluster of three islands known as the Westelijke Eilanden (westerly islands) built in the early 1600s; the islands are linked by narrow white wooden bridges. For three centuries, the

Westelijke Eilanden were home to shipyards, warehouses, various small industries, and a few stately homes. The Westelijke Eilanden fell into a long decline in the early 1900s, and for many years these islands were a place of ill repute. But as Amsterdam became a tourist destination and the cost of housing rose around the city, artists and musicians moved in, and the islands that had been derelict for so long gained a new life. Over the last two decades, the old decrepit warehouses were renovated

a car. We do, however, have five bicycles, including one tandem. This slower pace and more local life means you get to recognize, and then know, your neighbors.

A United Nations study some years back declared that Dutch children were the happiest in the world. From my experience, it's also a good place for adults. Dutch people work fewer hours and take more weeks of paid vacation than almost anyone else anywhere. Nobody complains about work-

Humans are porous things; like gulab jaman floating in rosewater sugar-syrup, or tofu in teriyaki sauce, we absorb the flavors and ideas of our environment.

and turned into apartments, a few modern buildings were put up, and gardens were planted. Walking into the Westelijke Eilanden feels like you're entering the Dutch Golden Age, with cobblestone streets, repurposed gas lamps, and beautiful houseboats moored along the quays.

Because of the semi-isolation from the rest of the city, it's also like living in a village. In the four years we've lived in Amsterdam, we've come to know far more people on these islands and around the city than we did in twenty years in Lafayette. A large part of this connectedness to the community is because we walk or cycle everywhere, as does pretty much everyone, and all the shops and markets and services one needs are within a short walk. For everything further afield, there are trams and ferries and all sorts of public transit, but like most Amsterdammers, we're more likely to get on a bike. Our apartment came with two parking spots in an underground garage, but even now, four years later, we don't have

life balance because it's fundamentally not an issue. Even during the pandemic when people worried about getting sick, the anxiety didn't become existential: nobody feared being bankrupted by medical bills.

Not everything about the Netherlands is perfect, and I could complain *ad nauseum* about the Dutch government's handling of the COVID pandemic and how I wish there were some hills nearby, but in a million other ways, it's a great place to live, and something of that Amsterdam mindset has crept into us and begun to push out the competitive status- and achievement-conscious mindset that is almost impossible to avoid in the US.

The point I'm trying to make is this: Humans are porous things; like gulab jaman floating in rosewater sugar-syrup, or tofu in teriyaki sauce, we absorb the flavors and ideas of our environment.

Lord Byron wrote of that porosity in his autobiographical poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage":

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me,
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture.

Byron was clearly no fan of urban life. Nor, it seems, was Vincent van Gogh, and it was probably his leaving the Netherlands, enabling him to immerse himself in a totally different world, that made all the difference to his art. Would Vincent van Gogh have become the Vincent who is beloved around the world if he hadn't swapped the cold gray skies over Holland for the sun-seared landscapes of Provence? I expect van Gogh might have continued painting variations on the *Potato Eaters*, a different experience entirely from viewing his sunflowers. I, for one, am glad he went to France.

Obviously, not everyone is averse to urban life. Samuel Johnson, the distinguished eighteenth-century Englishman of letters, adored London:

You find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.

Was Lord Byron more sensitive than Dr. Johnson, or was the London of Byron's day, some hundred years after Johnson's, that much noisier and more draining? Or does Johnson's comment on London simply reflect the need Johnson had for the resources and connections available to him in London, which he required for his work?

Alternatively, perhaps Dr. Johnson was drawn to novelty. The attraction of a city like London lies not only in the monuments

and cultural events. It lies in the promise of surprise, a genetically hard-wired appeal that has been documented scientifically.

For me, at least, it is not possible to arrive in the historical center of almost any city around the globe and not want to explore, especially in Europe, where cities date back to the Middle Ages or earlier. Some cities are effectively monocultures, but those that are home to large numbers of immigrants—like New York City, San Francisco, London, and Amsterdam—present even more reason to go off the beaten track. The more ethnically diverse the population, the more one finds neighborhoods with different types of shops serving different foods, with people wearing different clothes, speaking different languages. Perhaps because I grew up in a place just like this, my UN village in Queens, I feel simultaneously at home and energized in cities that have this kind of character, while my response to suburbs tends toward irritation. This is why suburbs with cookie-cutter strip malls with chain stores may be convenient, but are not an invitation to explore. And it is why Amsterdam, with its high level of architectural, ethnic, and cultural diversity, and very low crime rate, is such an appealing city for urban explorers.

I felt almost immediately at home in Amsterdam, despite how different it is, and part of that feeling of familiarity is because of the historical links between Amsterdam and my hometown. Before the English took over and named it New York, the southern tip of Manhattan Island was a Dutch colony known as New Amsterdam.

Like New York City, Amsterdam is home



to a huge number of cultural venues and there is never a lack of things to do. In our first year in Amsterdam, before the pandemic, my husband and I attended numerous cultural events across Amsterdam. At Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, we attended a piano recital of early twentieth-century French composers. The pianist, Natacha Kudritskaya, a young Russian woman who lived in Paris, gave a brief lecture on the impact of the French Impressionist painters on Satie, Ravel, and Debussy before sitting down at the piano and blowing us all away. On another night, we went to a concert of African jazz at the Bimhuis, Amsterdam's premier jazz club; on others, we attended concerts by American singer-songwriters at the Paradiso; and on still others we walked down the length of the Prinsengracht canal to the Royal Theatre Carré for everything

from Jethro Tull to a musical from London's West End. Amsterdam's international appeal, combined with its varied venues, means that on virtually every night there are concerts, theater, opera, or ballet from around the world somewhere in the city.

So what does it take, in essence, for a city to be a center for the arts, for culture, and creativity? Money, for one thing.

Well before the Medici family became known for sponsoring the arts in fifteenth-century Florence, the provision of key resources has been central to the arts. Writers (in the English language) flock to London and New York City, the Anglosphere centers of publishing. People working in the film and theater industry are supported by the infrastructure available in Los Angeles



and New York City. Musicians and composers tend to live within reach of cities having concert halls and performance venues. Painters and other fine artists may produce much of their work in the countryside, but they head to cities for exhibitions at art galleries and museums. Without that concentrated financial investment, the corresponding arts would not have achieved the same levels of sophistication. These resources draw both artists and the public, facilitating a flow of new ideas, people, and income.

The flip side of that coin is that for a city to incubate the arts, it has to be a good place for creatives to live. Few creatives, after all, have high incomes, and affordable housing is essential to attracting and retaining them. But it is not only a question of affordability; it's about livability. Are

the streets safe? Are minorities protected? Is it possible to raise children in the city and to grow old there? Are the resources in place to nurture early-career creatives? Societies with economic safety nets that protect all members and make it possible to live on modest incomes can provide an environment that fosters the arts.

It should also go without saying (but I'll say it anyway) that for the arts and culture of a city to be accessible to the population in general, ticket prices cannot be absurdly high. Putting aside the question of nurturing local talent, if the cost of admission is beyond most people's means, that city will fail at being a center for the arts and culture. Discounted and free tickets to matinee concerts and museums, free public open-air theater in the parks—such benefits enrich the lives of people living in or visiting a

city and encourage the artists behind those works.

Money, of course, is not the only thing. The arts flourish in highly diverse environments. In contrast to villages and small towns, large cities are far more commonly home to ethnically and culturally diverse populations, with universities and industry attracting talent and energy and drive from around the globe. A higher level of education is also associated with liberal political views and greater tolerance for freedom of expression, and this spills over into the arts.

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Although I was raised in a culture that viewed participation in the arts to be essential to happiness, it was easy to forget that during my long years as a scientist in academia. That's not to say I didn't listen to music or go to the movies, and, of course, I never stopped reading books, but I almost never went to plays or concerts, and the hootenannys of my youth were a distant memory. I just didn't have the time.

But in the few years leading up to our decision to leave the US and move to Amsterdam, I began to change that. I started taking time before and after scientific meetings to experience the local culture: music and dance, arts, cinema, and theater. Some of these I happened upon by accident when I wandered away from the endless Powerpoint presentations at conferences, such as an open-air performance of Japanese folk dances in the middle of Tokyo and an exhibit of Sebastião Salgado's photography in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. I'll admit to remembering nothing about a single lecture at either conference—including the ones I gave—but the moments when I watched an old man from Okinawa leading a dozen or so

Within the physical framework of a performance, the creators of art come together with the consumers of art, and through this common celebration, the two sides connect to each other.

adorable children on the stage are still vivid, years later, and the British-Saudi woman scientist I dragged to the Salgado exhibit became a dear friend.

Those experiences broadened and deepened my experience of culture, and it was while my husband and I were watching a Shakespearean play in Cambridge, UK, that I began to look at the arts as having an underlying yin-yang structure.

The yang phase is obvious: here a work of art is generated—a novel is published, a play is written and staged, a musical work is composed and performed, a ballet is choreographed and performed, a painting is executed and exhibited. The importance of the yin phase is equally essential: few artists would continue in their arduous endeavor without the support and appreciation of the public. And yet, the yin phase is far from passive. The emotional/spiritual sustenance provided by an audience rising to applaud at the end of a play or concert, the readers of books sending letters of appreciation to authors, and those who offer financial support is necessary to foster and maintain the creative ecosystem.

We could have found a way to stream that Shakespearean play, perhaps performed by a different group, but it wouldn't have been the same. Part of what I found so thrilling was that at the end, when the entire audience rose to its feet to cheer the cast, my husband and I were close enough to see the looks on the faces of the cast when they understood how much we'd loved what they'd given us; they practically melted into the stage. This give-and-take between artists and the public is a fundamental component of performing arts. Within the physical framework of a performance, the creators of art come together with the consumers of art, and through this common celebration, the two sides connect. Humans are social animals; we need to connect with others, and the performance arts play a critical role in serving that need. And when the performance is world-class, the experience can be transformative.

A friend called me the other day from the French Alps, where she was staying with her husband. "You should get out of the city," she said. "It would be good for you."

I tried to explain that we didn't have a car and were still avoiding planes and

But when we got off our WhatsApp call, I realized she was right. Although I do miss the mountains and the redwood forests and being able to look up at the night sky and see stars, I *am* such a city person. I love cities. Bertrand Russell, the Nobel Laureate, logician, and activist, collected rivers, but I collect cities. Especially cities like Amsterdam, with urban villages that bring people together and the rich, complex arts and culture that they provide. I don't think I could really live anywhere else.

Within seconds of writing that last line, I realized it's not entirely true. That is, I still regularly fantasize about living in the countryside. Living in the center of a city, even one as beautiful as Amsterdam, can be stressful, and there are times when what I need, more than anything, is to be far away from cities and people. That's not to say that Amsterdam doesn't have nature. Of all capital cities, Amsterdam may be one of the most green, and not only because it is so bike friendly. The canals and rivers and parks are home to all sorts of wildlife, and even within the city there are extensive green spaces—Amsterdamse Bos, for

example. It's also possible to cycle out of the city along one of the largest networks of bike paths anywhere in the world to polders and rural landscapes with small charming villages.

While I was working on this piece, a

Aesop had it wrong: why should we be forced to choose between city life and country life?

public transportation, as long as the COVID pandemic continued.

"Ah," she said, "you're such a city person. I couldn't live that way. I need nature."

"I do too," I said. "And I'm not such a city person."



Dutch artist friend who had read an earlier draft wrote to me, saying I'd missed a spectacular nature reserve under an hour's drive west of the capital. The pictures she sent of Amsterdamse Waterleidingduinen showed a truly beautiful landscape. But the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, and if you are, like me, occasionally gripped by anxiety over the catastrophic mess humanity has made of this planet, sometimes you just want to escape to parts of the planet where much larger stretches of the natural world remain undisturbed. The Netherlands is also potentially one of the countries most vulnerable to rising sea levels, despite the assurances of Dutch engineers. When you start thinking about those sorts of things, you look for hills, but there are no hills in sight. Whatever you think of the climate crisis,

living in the Lowlands is hard for someone who loves mountains.

I return to thinking of Aesop and Doña Flor. Aesop had it wrong: why should we be forced to choose between city life and country life? Why can't we, like Flor, have both? Perhaps, like Tomas Tranströmer and Tove Jansson, the solution is as simple as dividing one's time between city and country. Most people don't have this option, and I certainly didn't during the years I was a struggling single parent. Wherever we live—on an isolated homestead in the countryside, a small town, a bustling city, or we divide our time among these—those of us who love the arts and culture will inevitably find our ways to the great cities to participate in this astonishing enterprise. ❄️

Amsterdam, Netherlands



Even when I loved it—North Sheridan black with rain, the tobacco smell of old Comiskey Park on a summer afternoon, the Polish shopkeepers scrubbing down their stoops until they glowed as glamorous as pearls—Chicago was full of strangers coming into and out of the weather. They lived somewhere in between, I suppose. They lived and moved without me. They didn't need me.

From the library, a cavern full of foreign newspapers, books that had weathered centuries, I'd leap against South State and lose myself inside the hum and buzz of taxis and broad-shouldered men whose wives—in kitchens papered with Kennedy,

calendars, and the Pope—rinsed cabbage and peeled onions. If it were going to snow, I'd study my shoes, wondering if they'd make it to spring. I was a foreigner. Everybody was a foreigner. Everybody disappeared and reemerged in the unlikeliest of basements or bars, clutching broken toys, beers, the jewelry that used to be their grandmothers'.

New York was a song, Los Angeles the great disguise, but Chicago was always a work in progress—an actor made to memorize and then forget, a jigsaw puzzle with its corner pieces blown away, a pound of sand lifted from the shore of Lake Michigan and spread unevenly to Omaha, to Denver, and to Cleveland.

Once there, I never wanted to leave. I wanted to find someone with a map, a woman who knew the secrets buried below St. Michael's, a man who as a boy saw Ernie Banks and, therefore, understood America. My Chicago was a poem blurred and bleared by history and violence and the questions children think about before they fall asleep.

I remember mornings on Michigan Avenue when those summer baseball afternoons seemed nothing more than jargon. I remember standing among the Trib's obituaries all swirling, wondering what my name would look like on those pages. Would they get it right? Would they get my story right, and me, a small man easily forgotten,

a stranger too? Would they even care? I would've written my own then, but I was young, and death was just another among the myriad strangers rushing, strolling, seeking miracles. In Lincoln Park I looked for something after dark, but found only myself staring back. Where were you? Why were the benches arrayed with the feathers of long-dead birds? Why was the sky a color no one could describe?

Years later, these questions remain unanswered. Perhaps their answers can't be spoken aloud. Perhaps there are no human answers, but only the ones I used to hear whispered among the leaves that fell and gathered in the alleys off Lake Shore Drive. ✱

MY CHICAGO

CARL BOON

image info

BERLIN, GERMANY





Edward Steichen, *Flatiron Building*, 1904

image info

Burnham's Dream

The architect
of the Chicago World's
Fair burst through the night
imagining a building photographed
by Stieglitz and Steichen, more stunning
than his White City celebrating the New World,
a forever tourist attraction built on a sad flatiron shape
of land in New York City. Make no little plans, he dreams.

On the night train, Daniel Hudson Burnham almost rises from his dozing
and dreaming, planning a magical building in a city of magic, a copper-colored
legacy for his friend, George Fuller. Casting iron with glass-eyed facades, sketching
the steel frames to outline a triangular city block, Burnham smiles at the gentle curve
as narrow as a man's height. He shapes the tripartite terra cotta to hang on the metal
of an architecture sure to change the City skyline. Neighbors will call the new
building folly, saying the wind alone will crumble it to reddish dust.

The dreamer has long learned to trust every big plan, wink
at mockery and listen to himself. Burnham has seen
the rusted red planet of Mars steadfastly hanging
in the heavens since before Man could see.
Without doubt, he knows himself
to be the architect who built
the skyscraper that lasts
until the edge of time.

by Susan Carroll Jewell

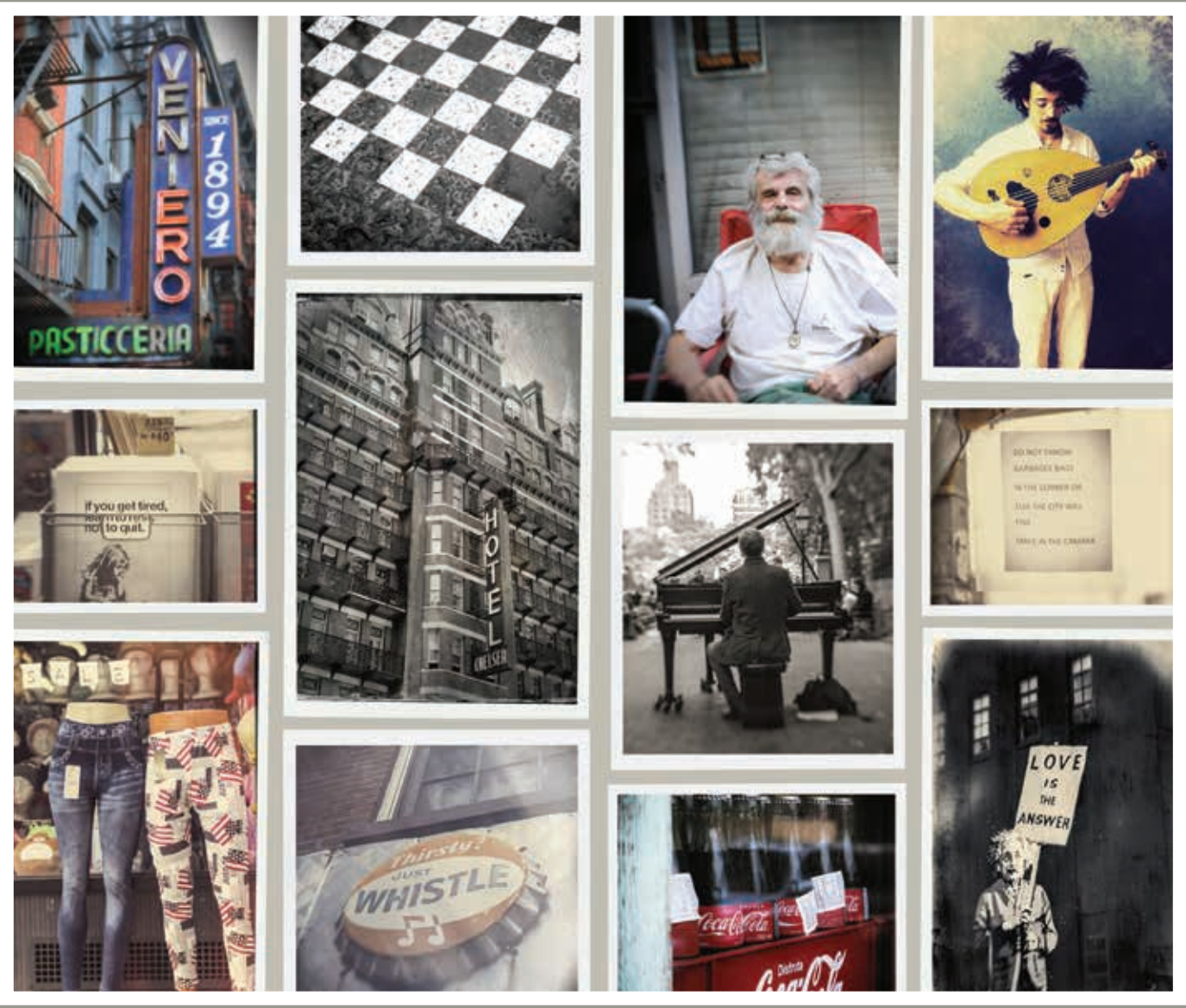


MJ Edwards

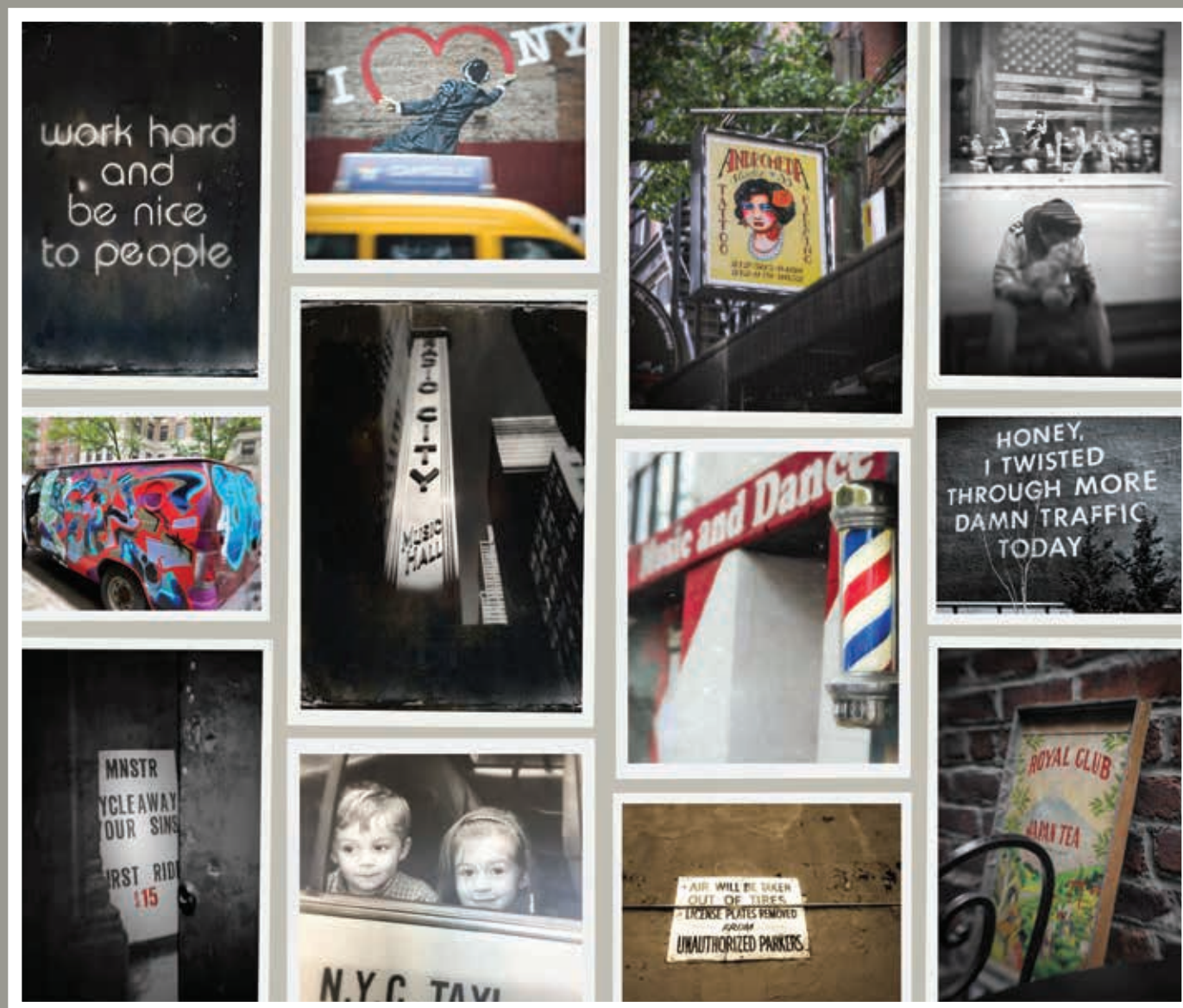
“Between 2015 and 2019 I made three week-long visits to Manhattan. My nephew lived close to Central Park, just off of 5th Avenue, and I found myself blissfully surrounded by art galleries and museums. I covered all of Central Park more than once and visited every museum and gallery within miles. In a city like New York, you breathe art and culture, and Central Park, with its fantastic assortment of trees and gardens is an oasis of nature in the midst of it all, offering its own wonders. The city is alive with ideas: from its street art to its architectural harmonies and dissonances; from its edgy contemporary and ephemeral art to its live theatre and opera, to its impressive collections of antiquities. It is a city of joy and sadness, of experiences and experiments, of risk-taking and smug confidence. It is a city of many dichotomies, but it is more than anything else a city that celebrates itself through the arts.”



What a Poem This Is . . .



Susan Currie



What A Poem This Is . . .

by Susan Currie

Manhattan . . . at every turn, in each moment there is something to be known. I am an intruder on this island. It is a place where I do not live. Like a poem whose true meaning eludes, the city's whispers and its operas unfold in a language in which I will never be fully fluent. Yet for decades, with my camera I return, continuing the quest to translate.

Upon arrival, my "pre-game" often consists of a field trip to the fabulous New York Public Library's Photograph and Print Collections department. Among the collection's riches are American images from the 1930s and 40s, limited edition portfolios, and works by New York-based photographers working in the 1970s and 80s and beyond. Open to the public, and free for all. These excursions are my segue into the city as I commune with the works of masters such as Helen Levitt, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, Jamel Shabazz and so many other photographers I meet under that roof. In his introduction to *The Americans*, Jack Kerouac praises the book's author, Robert Frank, saying, **"What a poem this is . . . the gray film that caught the actual pink juice of human kind."** A tall order for any artist to snatch that.

Always, these library hours prove to be an essential investment, well before I pick up my camera. They serve as a prelude, reminding me of the city's abundance and how to **use less in order to make more of a thing's whole.** In the presence of the work of such giants (and their processes for teasing out the soul of the city), I am lulled into a stillness and a clearer seeing. Armed with their imprints, off I then go to see for myself what I can of the city's everyday life.

In his 1949 treasure, *Here is New York*, E. B. White wrote of the city's inhabitants: **"they meet confusion and congestion with patience and grit—a sort of perpetual muddling through."** I suppose that is the through-line that most speaks to me and ultimately opens the shutter on my frames. That is the poetry, the "pink juice" that never fails in its sermon of the human predicament, never fails to stretch my mind and reinstall in me the truth of my very small figure on this planet.

Also in the pages of *Here is New York*, White advised, **"No one should come to New York to live unless he is willing to be lucky."** These visual notes and rhymes I continue to make are **my little bow to this city of dreamers and wanderers and muddlers... and a testament to the poems they make.** ✂



PYRE—AN LA INTERLUDE

BY JOE HILLIARD

And when I die.
“Burial at sea?”
“No ocean. I hate the ocean. I can’t even swim.”
“Why live in LA then?”
“No choice, man. My parents felt the call, the call of being jobless elsewhere. God wanted me to live here.”
“And die here.”
“And die here.”

•

In Los Angeles, death is both palpably visceral and decidedly vague. Every day there is a fatality on the freeway. Maybe a wrong way driver hopping on the 5 drunk at 3 am. Maybe drag racing on the 210 at midnight. Maybe some heavy construction worker on the 10 didn’t screw the bolt in quite right on his forty-inch-blade circular saw while cutting into some K-rail and shot the dervish off and severed the spine of his unsuspecting partner at 6 am. Maybe a jumper on the 101 after a spectacularly bad business lunch at the Jonathan Club at 1 pm. And maybe a commuter just gave up and died from being in bumper-to-bumper on the 91.



image info

Anytime. All the time. What does any of that mean? Freeway call numbers and times and vague pronouncements on the news feed. More concerned about the traffic flow than the precious bodily fluids flow. It's a numbers game. And you never see it. You see more Tom Savini work than real bodies here. It's all the same.

I hadn't been thinking about death. Not really. Who does? Or my own mortality. Sure, my dad had his cancer show up when he was my age. Just past the big five-0. And he was dead within six years. Or maybe seven. I wasn't really talking to my father at the time. It happens. To the best of us. To the worst of us. And no time off for good behavior. No time off for bad behavior. Despite what Hollywood tells you, death does not take a holiday. Neither did my dad. He kept on working until he got laid off. And then he got sick. Maybe old Frederic March was laughing at him through it all. None of that Brad Pitt 1990s nonsense. My dad was old school. Fred was coming for him.

I presume I was one of the worst of us. Like Gooper's kids in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Always got my hands in the ice cream. And rarely bothering to wash them.

But that wasn't on my mind. I wasn't having pains. My nose wasn't bleeding. That was one of the first signs my father had. Unexplained nose bleeds. The docs thought he was snorting coke. He was more incensed by that than by the initial cancer diagnosis. How dare they think he was



Capitol Records Building

doing drugs? Clean living won't get you very far either.

Nope, I was as healthy as I had ever been. But we all die, don't we?

And when I die.

"What about the Cinerama Dome?"

"Maybe like thirty years ago when there was only one screen. Not the multiplex it is now. You know, like when we saw that re-release of *The Wild Bunch*. Where the print



Brown Derby Restaurant

bled right over the sides and onto the curtains and the ceiling. It was magnificent."

"And the bridge. The bridge seemed like it would wrap around the entire theater."

"The bridge blowing was amazing. We all held our hand up like Bill Holden. Wait for the sign."

"Was it that long ago?"

"1995. They even gave us commemorative buttons. Seems like yesterday."

"Time is kinda meaningless in Los Angeles."

"Unless you're going to die."

"Unless you're going to die."

"Or you wanna go into the picture business."

"Some days you're too old. Some days you're too young."

"And some days you simply aren't dead enough."

"Amen to that."

I had a friend who worked in the [Capitol Records Building](#). In Los Angeles everyone knows at least twelve people in the business. Twelve hundred. Forget six degrees of separation from your bacon. That bacon is getting fried in the grease. If you are alive and breathing and walking down a street in LA, you've passed six in six seconds with skin in the game. I knew people who were trying to buy the Cinerama Dome, for crying out loud.

He did not work in the Capitol Records Building. His boyfriend did. Or maybe his girlfriend did. I couldn't remember which. It was the girlfriend that shot him though. Up on the trails underneath Griffith Park. So maybe it was the boyfriend who worked at



La Brea Tar Pits



Hollywood Bowl

Capitol. My friend survived. He moved out from his boyfriend's place. Got a restraining order against the girlfriend. Then married a *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* gaffer? Does that sound right? Or maybe it was a project accountant?

I remember communicator badge gift bags at the reception. So kitschy. They weren't even metal, just plastic. And they didn't have sound effects when you touched them. May as well have given us a commemorative button. If you're going to do a Hollywood wedding, then go all the way. You know a special effects guy. Twenty special effects guys. Although I think there was at least one Ferengi in attendance. Which was something.

My date sold their comm badge on eBay.

We spent the dinero on a Ghost of Christmas Future Roy Choi food truck. And some sex toys.

•

And when I die.

"Where is the Brown Derby now?"

"Isn't it still on Wilshire?"

"I thought they moved it."

"That was the Tail o' the Pup. Dogs. Not hats. Get your anthropomorphic buildings right."

"It always bugged me anyway. Looking like a hot dog dripping mustard. Way too phallic for my tastes. It's pervy."

"Next to the Beverly Center? What's more pervy than that behemoth?"

"That's more Patrick Nagel cold brittle pervy. Didn't you get banned from the Beverly Center?"

"Never caught. No convictions. We used to drag our skateboards up the outside escalators. Five stories. Have a pocketful of 25¢ superballs from the machine at Alpha-Beta. Skate hard to the middle of the mall. Up to the food court where you could look down three floors. Unleash the balls without mercy. Bouncy bouncy. Then skate, book it hard to the escalators on the other side and out of the Center. Never caught. No convictions. Me and Reymundo. You never knew him."

"Eighties kids. Ya'll sick in the head."

"At least I survived. Not dead."

"Not yet. You keep saying you want to be

buried. In the penile hot dog building."

"Screw the dog. And besides, the Pacific Dining Car, way more phallic. I mean train car? Like the end of *North by Northwest*? Need I say more?"

"That's not even Los Angeles."

"The Pacific Dining Car is right downtown. I've been there for a post-trial celebration with a bunch of attorneys. Thank god they paid."

"It's closed now anyway. All of those places are closed. Gonna bury you in a vacant lot. And I meant Hitchcock. They never make it further west than the Dakotas in *North by Northwest*. Poor example."

"Your focus is all wrong. It's the dick, not the food."

“I bet you say that to all your dates.”
“Only when I’m on my knees.”

•

So, where do you want to be buried then? Los Angeles does have its choices.

Angel’s Flight. Only if it’s out of commission again. *Como siempre*. Under the tracks. So easy to get underneath now. Not like when it was built directly into Bunker Hill, when you get kicked out the back like in *Hollow Triumph*. Or that German tourist in 2001. Now, it’s all tinkertoy tiers. Bury you in the metal.

[The Tar Pits](#). Just plop and drop. Like that *Lord of the Rings* parody where they dump Goddam in a tar pit with the ring around his neck. Cause it’s just too far to climb up one more mountain to die. Ain’t that the truth? Peter Jackson got it all wrong. Do you really like anything he’s done after *Braindead*? Do you want to swim with the fiberglass mastodons?

Capitol Records. Where the stalkers go to find your cheatin’ heart. And the ghosts. Was Hank Williams ever really there? Frank Sinatra. Nat Cole. Better not go there if you are planning on dying and not coming back. Royalties in perpetuity. More Elvis Hitler than Elvis Presley.

Cinerama Dome. Asked and answered.

[Brown Derby](#). Hats on the move. When I die, bury me down deep. Turn to stone. I’m not taking the night train moving truck anywhere.

•

And when I die.

[“The Hollywood Bowl?”](#)

“When I was a kid I saw Mickey Rooney there for Easter Sunrise service. I was like ten.

My parents got us up really early to make sure we got in. We still were way way up at the top. I don’t know if they bought tickets in advance or it was my dad going cheapest. Or maybe we just showed up, and that’s all that was left. You think you understand Mickey Rooney was short, but when you see him from the top of the Bowl. Or not see him, as the case may be. We had better tickets a few years later to see Mel Torme. Now that was a show.”

“How old are you again? Mel Torme? Was Rudy Vallee there too?”

“I’m old like Mel Brooks *2000 Year Old Man*. I saw Salieri kill Amadeus.”

“At the Hollywood Bowl.”

“The Pantages.”

“Evil. But the Bowl is the perfect place with those winding paths on the outside going up and up. Or, like, under the escalators?”

“I’d feel too Cesar Romero like that. *Two on a Guillotine*. Play the recording of my will on the stage.”

“Better Romero than Adam West.”

“I do adore my villainy.”

•

And when I die.

“The LA River.”

“Like set on fire all Viking funeral style?”

“I don’t think the drainage strip would fit a boat. Although we could hit further up where it’s not paved. Where it really is a river.”

“Now I know you’re lying. Next you’ll tell me Terry Sawchuck played for the Kings.”

“Up into Glendale, where it starts to trickle down. It’s a riverbed. I used to ride bikes down in it with *mis amigos* in junior high. José. Y Reymundo. They were cousins. Total opposites. But their moms made them hang out together all the time. I don’t even remember which I knew first. José lived by a

break in the fence. We’d drop our bmx’s down through the hole, slide down the riverbed sides. Mud and toads. Toads and mud. This was when we worried more about smog than drought. Maybe it’s all dried up there now. ¿*Quién sabe?* Hell, we even got chased by the cops once down there.”

“That sounds pretty far-fetched.”

“Sure, like a Hollywood movie. It was *Terminator 2* really. Me and Edward Furlong. That liquid cop came this close to ending me in seventh grade.”

“Wise guy. Maybe I should just have them bury you under the Norris Theater on USC, you cagey film buff.”

“Screw you. You know how I feel about private schools. And . . .”

“The University of Spoiled Children. For sure. But they have the best film archive around. You’ve seen more than your fair share of films there.”

“Too many. People love to have their screenings there. Makes them feel all Milius-y.”

“Biliously. Spielberg-ian. It would be divine providence to bury you there.”

“Bitter irony.”

“You could pop out of the floor for one last hurrah like Bill Holden in *Stalag 13*.”

“And have them play Siouxsie for me. But no Viking fire boats. No pyre.”

“There’s a drought coming on. You would burn the whole city down.”

“Isn’t it on fire already?”

“Depends on your point of view. We could be drowning.”

“Could be buried in cement.”

“That would be the ghost of Huizar Ever-Present. Wrecking ball fever kills us all.”

“The buildings will survive. Even LA Supervisors can’t destroy them all.”

“Play some Exploited. *Dead Cities. Horror*

Epics. The Brits understand LA better than Black Francis.”

“Why not some Megadeth then? *Killing Is My Business*.”

“Kiss me on my business.”

“Drilling is my business.”

•

“And business is good. Didn’t you have a Vic Rattlehead dentist t-shirt?”

“I think he was supposed to be a doctor. With a meat cleaver.”

“Do you miss Reymundo? Hanging with him?”

“Not really. I don’t miss much of anyone.”

“Perv.”

“You know it.”

“And no one will miss you, either.”

“Book it.”

“I know I won’t.”

“I love you too, Keyes.”

•

Suck it, Gram Parsons. No Joshua trees for me. Although a nudie suit would be nice.

•

Postscript: I don’t know if they buried me in the LA River. If they burned me in effigy down where they filmed the chase sequence in *Repo Man*. If they simply scattered my ashes across the cement. As they say in the movies though, if you are reading this, then I am already dead. At the very bitter end, where death belongs.

I hate when they start off with the death. *Sunset Boulevard*. That’s an exception. But then, Billy Wilder could get away with just about anything in this city.

I hope *mis amigos* did too. ❀

Rosalie Sanara Petrouske



Board of Water and Light



Boji Tower

Mark Saba



Pittsburgh Spring, 1950



Pittsburgh Rooftops



Stamford Station in Winter

Medellín, Colombia



image info

THIS CITY

It's in me, the core of me, this city with its dearth of trees, surfeit of fences;
this city of clenched keys ready for an attacker's eye; this city framed
with murals, gargoyles; where acrobats, string quartets perform to make a buck.
This city of dollar pizza, saffron, curry, good humor men in ding-dong carts
and bad humor men in alleys; this city with the subway cop
who asked for a fuck when I was 14, where dancers groove to All Night Long.
This city of long lines, of people drinking wine on park blankets
listening to Shakespeare, to John playing here, singing Imagine
in this city of strawberry fields miles from unpolluted fruit.
This city, where each yard no bigger than a sidewalk slab
has a fig tree taller than the top of its fence. This city of layers
that leaves me unraveled, rewrapped, unraveled again; this city of rappers
where I met the love of my life in a tangle of run-down poets
in a run-down tenement with no windows; this city of chandeliered pretensions
operatic tragedy, smiling bridges arcing false promises across the waters that separate us.
This city that separates me from who I am; this city that is who I am,
seductive as a belly dancer's ripple, begging for love like a misbehaving spouse;
this city, waiting for the rising river to lap its avenues and cover the concrete with its kiss.

by Dina Friedman



Andrei Kushnir, New York, from Central Park



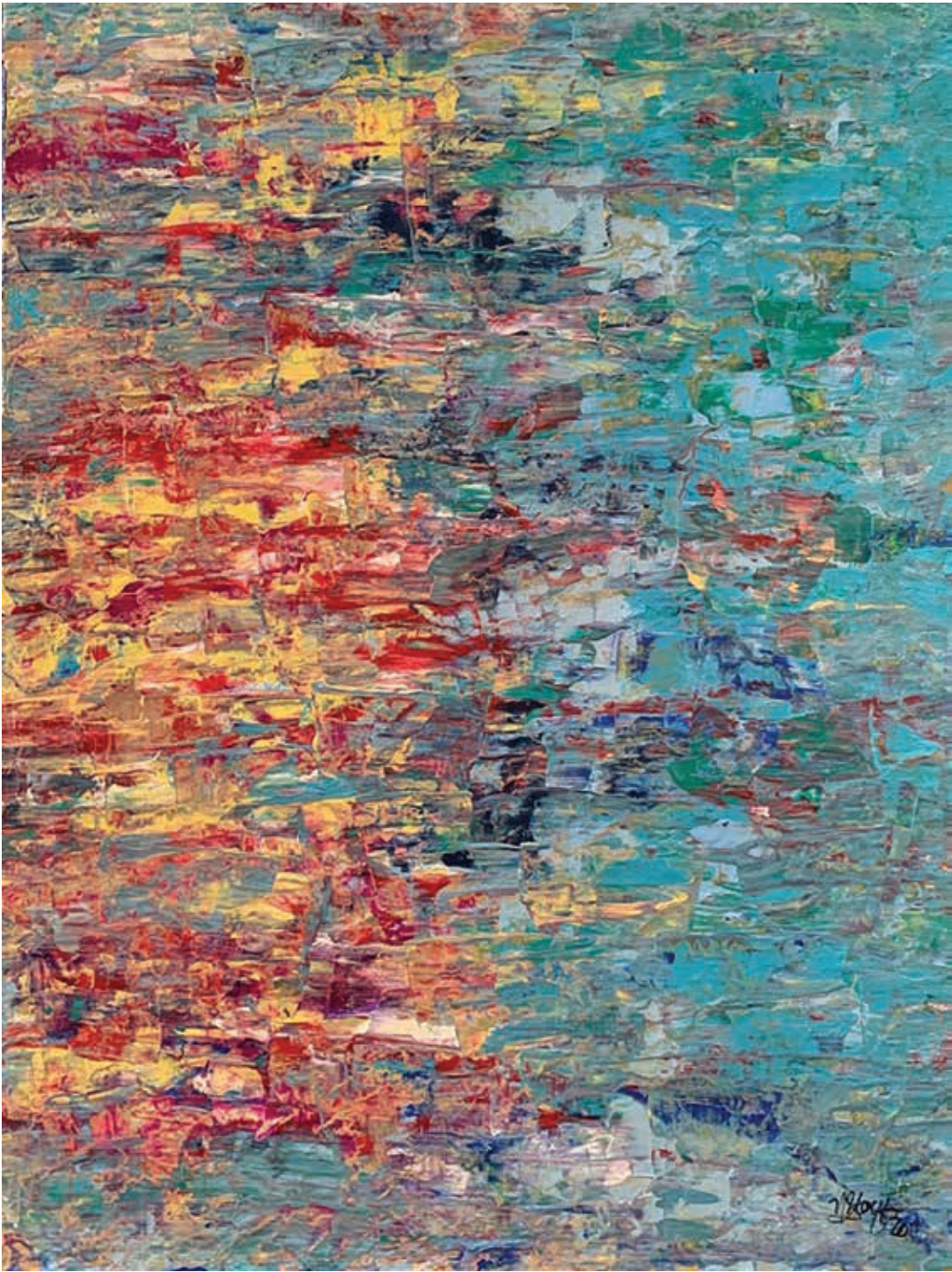
Prague, Czech Republic

Nanci Stoeffler

Lu Liu



Urban Playground



Cityscape

Marrakesh, Morocco



image info



Glasgow in Squares

David McVey

Most visitors to Glasgow encounter one vast, celebrated public square by choice and perhaps two or three more in passing. Yet the squares of central Glasgow reflect the city's history, people, and character. It's worth seeking them all out.

The showpiece that everyone heads for is, of course, **GEORGE SQUARE**, the great paved plaza with its statues, lawns, and Sir Walter Scott on a column, all under the benign gaze of the magnificent City Chambers.

The square is a spectacular beating heart for the city. It was first marked out in 1781 and named for the reigning monarch, George III (the "mad" one played by Nigel Hawthorne). Originally, it was a private garden for the homes that were subsequently built around it. Gradually, the town houses were replaced by fine public buildings: the City Chambers was completed in 1890, the Merchant's House on the western side in 1877, and the former main post office—now

offices and very exclusive apartments—on the southern side in 1878. On the northern side, Queen Street Station's curved glass roof first soared in 1880. At the center of the square, of course, is the Sir Walter Scott monument, which dates from 1838. Glasgow's cenotaph appeared at the eastern end of the square in 1924.

The City Chambers is one of the most spectacular buildings in Scotland. It's well worth booking a place on a tour. The interior takes the breath away, and no Glaswegian will need prompting to tell you that there's more marble here than in the Vatican, though I'm not sure that's true; has anyone actually weighed the marble in both locations?



If you head south down Queen Street, which forms the western end of the square, you'll quickly reach the mounted statue of the [Duke of Wellington](#) (usually anointed with a traffic cone to provide the essential modern image of Glasgow and its playful attitude toward authority). You're now outside the Gallery of Modern Art. Many visit both statue and gallery without knowing they're in **ROYAL EXCHANGE SQUARE**. The gallery building was originally

a private mansion, dating from 1778 and reputedly the finest in the city. It was built for [William Cunninghame](#), one of the city's tobacco lords—hence tainted by the twin evils of slavery and smoking. Beginning in 1827, it was remodeled as the Royal Exchange, where business deals were thrashed out, and the square got its name then. I remember it as Stirling's Library, which it became in the 1950s, but the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) opened in the building in 1996.



South of Buchanan Street's junction with Argyle Street is **ST. ENOCH'S SQUARE**. It was once a busy transport hub, with the magnificent St. Enoch Station and its no less impressive hotel to the east, the dainty underground station in the center ([p. 76, lower left](#)), and buses plying throughout. The station and hotel are gone and much lamented, replaced by the St. Enoch shopping mall. You now reach the underground station by modern domed entrances, but the

original building is still there and serves as a café. The square isn't a hugely attractive space, but at least it's now traffic-free, and it comes into its own every December when it hosts one of Glasgow's Christmas markets.

(St. Enoch is said to be the mother of St. Mungo, the city's patron saint. Born Princess Theneva, her father threw her out for being pregnant with Mungo after an illicit encounter with her cousin. Read more [here](#).)



Which takes us to **CATHEDRAL SQUARE**, a public space surrounded by visitor attractions that recall Glasgow's medieval center: the soaring cathedral itself, the stunning garden cemetery of the [Necropolis](#), [Provand's Lordship](#) (the oldest secular building in the city), the Cathedral House Hotel, and [St. Mungo's](#)

[Museum of Religion](#). It's a quieter spot than the other city center squares, a place to reflect that here Glasgow was born. Close your eyes and try to picture a small church with St. Mungo presiding, the [Molendinar Burn](#) trickling down the glen to the east, and a wild hill (now the Necropolis) looming on the far bank.



From Cathedral Square, walk or take a bus down Castle Street and its continuation, High Street, and you can visit two lesser-known squares. **ST. ANDREW'S SQUARE** was once a fashionable residential address for the city's wealthy, dominated by [St. Andrew's in the Square](#), now one of the oldest surviving churches in Glasgow. This square became a bit down at heel, but the demolished buildings have been replaced by new structures in keeping with the setting, and the square is traffic-free. After the church congregation moved to new premises in 1993,

the building was painstakingly restored and is now a restaurant and traditional music venue celebrated for the gigs it hosts during Glasgow's famous Celtic Connections music festival. Its future as a venue is in some doubt, but the Scottish Buildings Preservation Trust that owns St. Andrew's will no doubt safeguard its future.

I'd go as far as to say that if there's a building in Glasgow that deserves to be better known and more frequently visited, it's St Andrew's in the Square. Let's hope that future access to its interior can be ensured.



High Street becomes the Saltmarket and just before reaching the Clyde, you find the McLellan Arch, which guards the entrance to **GLASGOW GREEN**, the city's much-loved and oldest public park. The open space in front of the arch is pleasant, now, but it has a baleful history. Across the road is the city morgue and the High Court. There was once a prison here, too, and executions took place on this spot. The open space then was called Jail Square. In the 1920s it was renamed Jocelyn Square, after the twelfth-century Bishop of Glasgow who, among other things, inaugurated the city's legendary summer

holiday, the [Glasgow Fair](#). He also wrote the book *Life of St. Mungo*.

Glasgow soulsters Love and Money, fronted by James Grant, recorded a song for their brilliant 1988 album, *Strange Kind of Love*, entitled "Jocelyn Square." The chorus includes a refrain about how it was raining in Jocelyn Square. That perhaps should serve as a warning to all visitors to the city. In rain or sunshine or snow, once you've visited Jocelyn Square, carry on and spend time in the wonderful, historic, magical Glasgow Green. It's not a square, but you really mustn't miss it.



BLYTHSWOOD SQUARE, right in the center of Glasgow's office district, is that rare thing now—a square with a private garden. It's still a pleasant corner of the city, and in any case, the gardens are sometimes open to all. It was originally called Garden Square when laid out in 1823, not because of its gardens but because it was designed by Hamilton William Garden (thankfully he didn't call it Garden's Gardens). The square was built on the summit of Blythwood Hill. Garden had to reduce the height of the hill by around thirty feet to ensure a nice level site. Eventually the name of the hill spread to the square itself.

It's surrounded by handsome buildings, none more so than the one on the eastern side. For many years this was the home of the Royal Scottish Automobile Club, and accordingly, the square often saw the start of car rallies, including the Monte Carlo. The building is now a very luxurious hotel.

The other famous building in Blythwood Square is No 7, a fine townhouse at the northeast corner. In the 1850s it was occupied by the family of a Glasgow architect named James Smith. His daughter, Madeleine, took a lover, Pierre Emile L'Angelier, and in 1857 Madeleine was accused of his murder by poisoning. The charge was found "not proven"—rather than "not guilty"—and tongues wagged ever after. The case inspired many stories and even a 1950 film *Madeleine*, directed by David Lean. Madeleine eventually moved to the United States and died there in 1928. The building sold for £2.45 million in 2017 and there is talk of it becoming a hotel. Perhaps, as a gimmick, you'll be able to hire a food taster at mealtimes.

These, then, are some of Glasgow's squares. There are plenty of them, every one has its attractions, and each tells another chapter of the unfolding story of Glasgow and its people. ❁

Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom



image info





Musée d'Orsay and the Pont Royal Crossing the Seine

The Artistic Delicacies of Paris

Vivien Zieline

image info

I have spent many a quiet moment gazing at Rodin's [*The Kiss*](#) at the Tate Gallery on the banks of the River Thames in London. My eyes are always captivated by the cool sensuous lines of the white marble, the swirling intertwining bodies carved so artistically with such loving, beautiful balance and tenderness.

Now here I was, close to the banks of the River Seine in Paris, almost eyeball to eyeball with Rodin's pensive [*The Thinker*](#) as he pondered about life, the world, and the enormity of its challenges, and gazed with unfathomable sight across the gardens of the Musée Rodin surrounded by a huddle of [*The Burghers of Calais*](#). I was about to enter the main museum building, L'Hôtel Biron, to see the original of Rodin's three life-sized statues titled *The Kiss*. I couldn't wait.



Musée Rodin

It was 1996 and I was in Paris on my third trip to this fascinating city. I was taking a weekend break from my giftware store, the China Ware House Company, on London's Carnaby Street, leaving it in the capable hands of my partner Robert.

I was traveling with my friend Maddy. We had plotted and planned this trip for many weeks, deciding to focus on a menu of the artistic delights of Paris and basing ourselves in a small hotel located in the tangle of streets close to Notre Dame. Earlier that morning we had taken a leisurely stroll from our hotel to the Musée Rodin and were now ready to move on to our next visual delight—the Musée d'Orsay. On a previous visit to Paris in 1994, I had spotted the impressive Beaux-Arts exterior of this former railway station from the river, and I was eager to see its famed Impressionist collection containing works by some of my favorite artists.

Entering the high-domed ceiling of the forecourt of the former station, I was immediately struck by the way the traditional and modern blended with light and color

to seamlessly entice the visitor to take a deep breath and draw the energy to face the overwhelming richness of the art on display. I went from gallery to gallery dazzled by the colors, shapes, imagination, and works—many familiar to me, but some not—of my favorite artists: Renoir, Cezanne, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, van Gogh, Monet, Manet, Sisley, Degas, and Pissarro. It was a rich visual delight that I gorged on for hours, only emerging with my head spinning to meet Maddy in the foyer when the museum shut for the night.

One would have thought that with such a rich visual diet, we would go for something quieter in the evening, but we were stoked up and ready for more. We spent the evening enjoying the delights of Montmartre, wandering its winding streets and art galleries, listening to jazz, and sampling the menus and wines of some of its bistros.

The next morning our first priority was a leisurely breakfast. We sat outside on comfortable cane furniture at a small cafe near Notre Dame, watching the city come alive and



delighting in the hot strong coffee and fluffy pastry of freshly baked buttery croissants. Fortified and full, we then made our way to the Marais district to the Hotel Sale, which housed the Musée National Picasso. Picasso had for a long time held a special place in my heart.

Many years earlier, as a child in London, I had been summoned, together with some friends, to the principal's office to be reprimanded for some long forgotten

childish prank. As we stood silently in front of her desk, I was captivated by a painting on the wall behind her. It was so calm, and my eye delighted in its simplicity and the lovely blue and green colors. It was Picasso's [*Child With A Dove*](#). From that day on, I became a firm Picasso fan, a somewhat surprising and unexpected legacy gained as the result of misbehaving in class. Many years later, as my appreciation increased, I traveled to Madrid to see a very different style of his art: his stunningly brilliant painting *Guernica*, which so convincingly conveyed the stark horror of war.

Aware of the enormously eclectic range of paintings, engravings, and sculptures that were part of this French National Picasso collection that would require weeks of study, I decided to focus on one aspect of Picasso's later art—his work with ceramics. At the China Ware House Company, we had recently begun to stock the Artis Orbis Homage Collection to Picasso, which had been authorized

for production by the Picasso estate, and I was eager to see some of the originals these works were based on. I was not disappointed. The range of colors, shapes, the sheer imagination displayed was mind-boggling. It was a carnival of colorful delight, a ceramic whirligig.

Time flew by and it was soon time for some re-energizing lunch. The museum was located in the Marais district, the traditional Jewish Quarter of Paris, and offered us the



Claude Monet's Water Lilies at Musée de l'Orangerie

perfect dish, a tasty falafel sandwich, making for the quick lunch we needed if we were to have time for our final artistic delicacy of this visit—Musée de l'Orangerie.

Though the Orangerie was offering a wide medley of our most admired artists' works, there was one location that pulled us toward it like a powerful magnet—the two oval rooms where we could float among the wonders of Monet's water lilies. These two rooms, each containing four curving canvasses, were constructed to receive shifting beams of light from the roof. They were fashioned like warm embraces to encircle you in a powerful, captivating hug

that allowed you to be imbued with the sheer beauty and colors of those wonderful water lilies. I have always thought that the goldfish is the most unfortunate of fish, sentenced to swim endlessly in circles, a passive observer of outside life. But to be a goldfish in these wonderful rooms, to luxuriate in the cooling circles of such timeless light-shifting waters could be a rather pleasant prospect.

As I stood there absorbed and immersed in the infinite beauty and light of those marvelous paintings, my thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a familiar questioning voice.

"Hello, Vivien, what are you doing here? Is Robert with you?"

These oval rooms were really small and only allowed a small number of visitors at a time. I was just here in Paris for a long weekend with my friend , and didn't know anyone else in the city, so I looked around in some amazement. Standing just behind me were Kathy and Bob from California. They were regular customers to my China Ware House store, usually visiting London once a year and shipping English dinnerware home to Los Angeles. I had just spoken to them a few days ago in the shop, and they had said they were traveling on to France and Italy, but who would have imagined that I would bump into them in such a small and unique space?

With a smile I replied quietly so not to disturb the other art lovers, "Robert's back in London minding the store while I take a well-deserved short vacation. What a co-incidence to see you here. What a small world it is. How are you enjoying your travels in Paris?"

"It's wonderful," Kathy whispered back, "I've never seen so much wonderful art gathered in so many museums in one city, and these Monet Water Lily rooms must be among the *crème de la crème*."

"You are so right," I agreed, thinking to myself—what a lovely way to sum up our enjoyable short trip savoring the artistic delicacies of Paris. ❀



Jane Gottlieb

Place des Vosges, Paris, France

An aerial photograph of a multi-lane highway bridge crossing a wide river. The bridge is filled with traffic, including many yellow taxis. In the background, a dense city skyline is visible under a dramatic, cloudy sky at sunset or sunrise. The lighting is warm and golden.

"A city is
more than
a place in
space, it
is a drama
in time."

—Patrick Geddes

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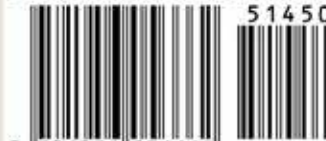
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