

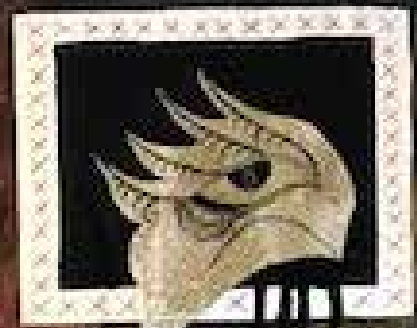
RAGGED CLAWS

YUBA SUTTER

arts

MAY
2020
VOL. 2
NO 1

*I should have been a pair of ragged
claws scuttling across the floors
of silent seas.*
— T.S. Eliot



Amelia Villagomez
Gold Key

OKRA

Marysville Charter
Academy for the Arts



EDITOR'S NOTES

by **Shawntay Arroyo**

The arts have been an important part of my journey as an individual from the time I was a child. My love of words and the ability to write them carved out my career path and led me to join Yuba Sutter Arts as a volunteer. This wonderful organization's mission statement falls right in line with my own statement, to make the arts a universal message that can be heard and understood by all peoples. I am so happy to share the wonderful works created by students who participated in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards event; many of them won awards and have achieved regional as well as national recognition. In this issue, I wanted to ask a question of all our readers: what is the use of art?

Art is so often seen as something frivolous and trivial; as something disposable and inefficient. When reading art, looking at art, or even creating art, we ask what is the meaning of this piece? The question we should ask is how does it make us feel? Understanding art leaves us with the perception of accomplishment, but feeling art leaves us with the knowledge of self.

Art in all its varied forms help us understand ourselves and each other, it cultivates empathy by giving us perspective. Every piece shared in this journal was chosen with this thought in mind.

The written word has been one of the most captivating forms of art and expression; *Shakespeare* changed history with his words, lest we forget. Many may say they aren't as enchanted by words as they used to be; with books, newspapers, and magazines being considered relics of a bygone era. But to those people I say words are modern day magic because they can change the world.

Andre Maurois, a French author, speaks to us from the past:

"Art is an effort to create, beside the real world, a more humane world."

Writers, Painters, Sculptors, Poets, Photographers, Seamstresses, and all other Creators give us a window into their vision of the world. Perhaps we can get a spark of their magic if we allow ourselves to feel it.

Kendall Vanderwouw
Silver Key

Ghidotti Early
College High School

ICE QUEEN

Men that pray for hooked gums, open lips
With sealed teeth, swordfish markings, scabbed oil
Plasters to vibrate their throat strings, she
Wants to chew their lips, and twist beards
so they see her

Bloody reindeer. Wants to bind voice and sight
and send them

Into hurricanes. Feed them swollen stars to sear their
Heartstrings. The men with oiled throats, she'd
Drown their boats in fish scales and scabby-studded
mermaid tails—

Clay each face in kale and cement them with an
exhale—

Cloak in cocoa, wait for them to pump her throat,
Lick her butter belly beehives, harvest elk pelts
from berry

Welts. She wants greasy velvet lips to trip
As her ice mask melts, the matted eyelashes of
fantasy

To slash and knead
Towns at their knees.

She'd stand in robes near
Jelly sunshine, ice her toes in fishtails and melt her
mask in light rinds. Men with

Warm throats soothed by whiskers, ears
Wrung with whispers, they'd chew cheeks and
break wrists, escaping

Embraces to taste breath glands of
honey. She'd

Swell lips under stingrays, torn tongues licking
Ashtrays, pick bones and milk

From her teeth, before dissolving and sobbing
In the final arctic sea.

Sophie Grenke
**Gold Key/
American Voices**

Davis Senior
High School

THE SILENT PREDATOR

Sitting here at this gleaming black table, I watch them move around each other. I can see her bruises and the way she flinches when his fingers brush her skin. She tells me she's fine when we talk on the phone late at night, but I hear the way she whispers, afraid he'll wake at any moment. So, I visit as often as possible, just so she's safe and I watch him. The way he moves like a predator and the way his eyes will lock on her until she looks away. But now they smile at each other and pretend they're in love. I wish I could scream and cry and punch him in the face until it's a bloody mess, so he can feel what she feels. But I just sit here at this gleaming table and watch my mother become a shell of herself because of this man who we know she'll never leave; she'll always go back. God forgive me please.

THINGS I PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND IN 3 PARTS

1.

What is 3am but tap water and salt
and things we wish we had?

What is love but something that comes easy,
and often refuses to leave?

What is the sun but something that burns and belongs to all of us and no one?

What is rain but the blood of the sky?

What is God but ashes and a pleading for a freedom no one understands?

What is time but a human invention to be spent alongside
someone that makes you smile?

2.

What makes a woman?

The way she walks,
Like she carries the weight of the world
And it is easy.

Or the way she talks,
Like she is fighting a war,
Every word on her tongue
A battle to be heard.

Or the way she learns
From mother, or grandmother, or aunt or sister,
She learns the best way to live and keep living
While in a world that thinks her so small.

3.

I am made of tap water and salt and things i wish i had,
You can learn me easy, but i burn and belong to no one.

I am blood of the sky and ashes

And best smiling.

The soles of my feet are buried in the ground

For the weight of what I am holding,

I scream and fight a war

In my throat,

There is blood on my hands.

I wish to tell you

You cannot fix me.

That what you think to be damage,

Is a part of me,

Trust it is not a part of me I love just yet,

But I cannot separate it from what makes me human and lovely.

Jessica Yim
Gold Medal

PRECARIOUS CONSUMPTION

Granite Bay
High School



Anne Zhao
Silver Key

THROUGH THE SIDE ALLEY

Davis High School

1. Tituba

i, a girl, keep a tab in my browser
open to pornhub at all times - for i
appreciate depictions of love, both real

and imagined, and seeing girls girls girls
kiss - i've never watched to the point where
they drop their clothes like dead

petals and split themselves open like seed
pods. girls like me me me wrap boys
around their hips like chains and let them

drool onto thighs and knees -
free nourishment for sensitive skin. we grow up
from cracks like weeds weeds weeds:
we flourish on hot asphalt

and between blistered toes. our hair drapes
like silk and linen and smells of burning
buildings - our legs tangle together

when we waltz for attention that only the
moon receives. we - a girl girl girl - burn
our arm hair off with stolen matches

and in the dark and dirt of solitude we
wait for you you you and we trim
our nails in anti

icipation for the coming events we kiss
kiss kiss each other to practice for the
touch we really crave we caress in the

light of fires and find that our heads
can turn at angles we'd never let boys
see we weep to the skies while clinging

to teeny tiny panties and cry for mary
and the angels to hear our prayers
and grant us the noses we saw in vogue

2. fossil fuels

smooth skin like refined petroleum
whipped into jelly and spread over
burns. it serves a purpose: soften.
heal. nurture. i understood nudity
earlier than most and knew that
my collar was and is a flamethrower.

my panties are a nylon
and polyester mix weave - coal
and petrol derivatives. broken down to atoms
and built up again into
itty bitty lacey bottoms to
be thrown away by fat old mothers
jealous of the youth they never cherished.
my mother had me late.

lipstick is to be worn only ironically - i
forbid femininity, for any true
expositions of the softness i hold
beneath my breasts leave me open
and ready, flesh only to
be nibbled at and licked up.

instead: abrasive. tough. a cat's tongue on your
sticky fingertips. she tastes the fruits
of my labor and savours
what remains.

3. minimalist breakfast, October 17th

I make pancakes on a greasy griddle
by moonlight and leave them on
my lawn for the stars to taste. I kiss teeth. I wear pink
- only ironically. You ask me to write
you a poem; and who am I to oblige?
I eat peanut butter off the spoon - chunky above all,
including God herself, and processed to Hell
and back. This is not for you. Life's simple
pleasures are these: a kiss on the eyelids /
hot summer rains / cryptid sightings in your hometown.
I do not create for you or me or us.
I paint. I write. I wink into the sun and I send it my love.

Hailey Sloan Honorable Mention

Marysville Charter
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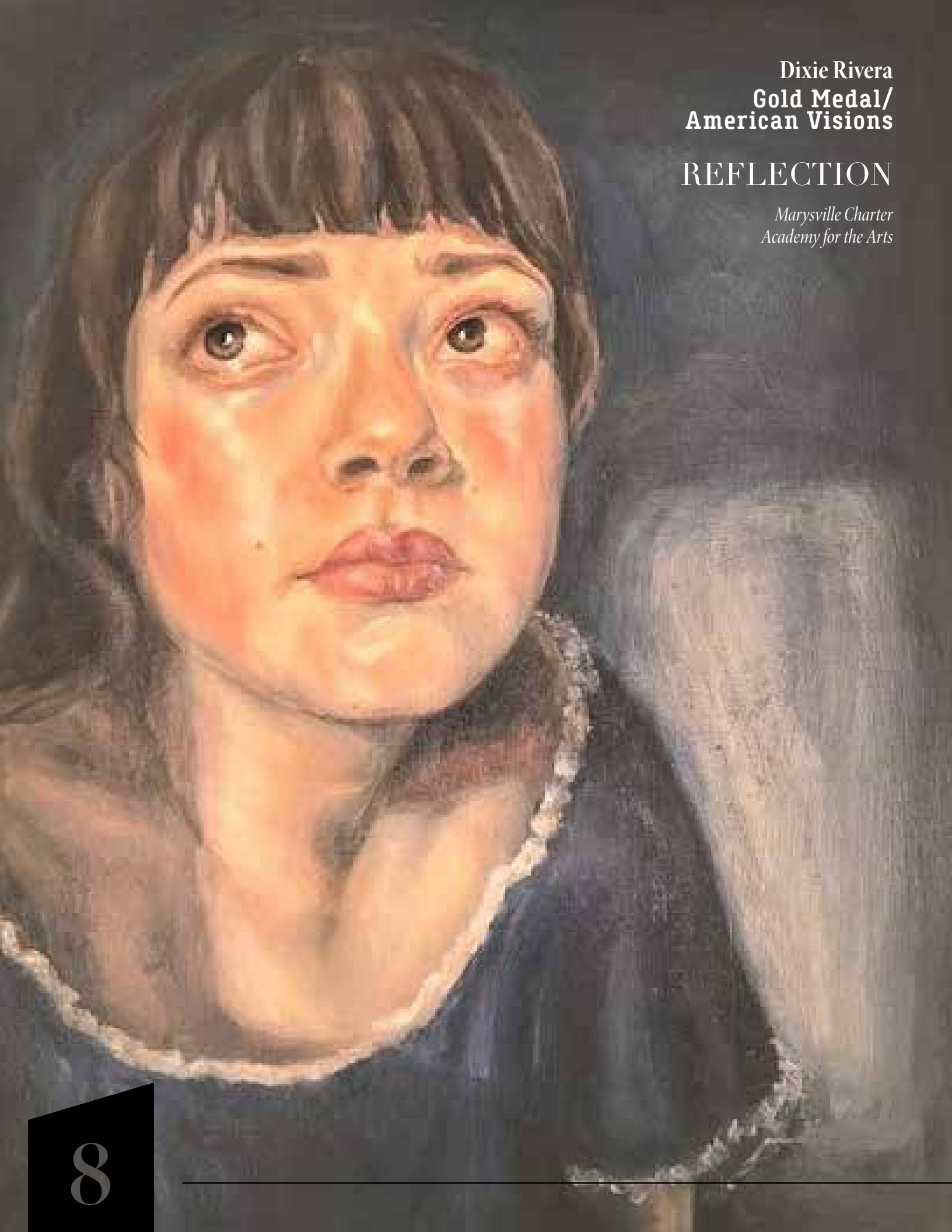
WHAT I WOULD DO...

If I was neurotypical:
I would wake up in the morning
and feel nothing but rested.
No medicine to worry about,
No staying in bed until the sun goes back down,
Nothing but peace and quiet.

If I was neurotypical,
I would begin my day with a home-cooked meal.
My siblings and I would sit and dine together,
and never ever dare to argue.
My daily planner would have all the current homework
assignments crossed off of it
There's no way you would catch me with lower than an A.

If I was neurotypical
I would no longer be able to hear -- taste -- feel
The surround sound beat of my
heart through my skull.
Or the ringing in my ears that's as sharp as glass.

If I was neurotypical...
I wouldn't be me.



Dixie Rivera
Gold Medal/
American Visions

REFLECTION

*Marysville Charter
Academy for the Arts*

Gwyneth Mauk

Honorable
Mention

*Marysville Charter
Academy for the Arts*

I DO NOT BELIEVE IN GOD, BUT I AM IN LOVE WITH THE IDEA

I do not believe in God,
but if I did, I would call her friend.
I would not pray to her,
But I would talk to her.

In the early hours of the morning,
When the world beyond my bed frame
No longer exists
And I can't remember how to move my muscles,
I would ask her to tell me
The story of what caused her to cry our oceans.

When I am looking to the sky with my eyes closed,
Absorbing the warmth of the sun,
I would ask her all the things
That go into making a soul.
I would not fear her
Or ask her to solve my problems,
I would ask her how it felt
To watch a baby being born
In the same building in which someone was dying.

When my skin is sweating,
And everything feels heavy, and tired,
I would ask her if she meant
To paint constellations in freckles
On sun-kissed cheeks,
Or I'd ask her what she thought of crooked teeth.

I would not beg her for an afterlife,
Or plead to save me from fire,
I would ask her how far away from Earth
One must be for
Everyone to become ants
And ants to become nothing.

I do not believe in god, but if I did,
I would reach to the sky
And I think of our planet in her palm.
Then thank her for showing me how
Life here could be the heaven we are
So desperate for.

TONGUE OF NOSTALGIA

The slight wind wafts it over to me. The scent lingers on my tongue and pours out my eyes. Salt... a seasoned dish of memories and summer nights illuminated by the campfire at Bob's Pine Grove and the shine of the sun through a translucent haribo gummy bear. The thoughts of glass rounded by the rough seas, aloe vera plants at a cottage, an emerald dolphin, and a mouth full of sand drift in and out of consciousness as the sun sets over the horizon. The sting in my nose keeps me awake and aware but relaxes me simultaneously, letting me breathe for what seems like the very first time. Salt... a rich tapestry of family, friends, and smores inside of ice cream cones. The feel of a fresh deck of cards in the darkness, a game lit by a dim lantern at midnight, sunscreen against rough skin, and freckles dancing on my face, they all remind me of the slight breeze that licks at my senses with a tongue of nostalgia and tears at my nostrils with mothering arms. Salt... Empires of sand built carefully by hand wash away and all that remains of their kingdom is the little stick and leaf flag on top. A stomach full of good times about to burst and a mother's hand on a child's warm forehead as he drifts off into dreams of the sun, sand, sea, and... Salt...

THE WORSHIP OF A THING MIGHT BE THE THING THAT BREAKS IT

In Chinese culture, porcelain is envy. Porcelain—manufactured by grinding petuntse stone to powder, then mixing the powder with white clay. The shape is left to the molder's choice.

My ancestors pioneered this process. In the Song Dynasty, tradition told girls to wear shoes so small, they were carried from place to place not in spite of but because of their disfigurement. Feet were bound together so tight, their footfalls could not be traced anymore. When the practice was banned by the Chinese government in 1911, they adapted new ways of altering themselves.

My mother is a watercolor painter infatuated with the still-life. She rejects the self-portrait, says survival is a shameful act how only the boys get second servings until they swell everywhere but in the head. They preserve the head for post-immigration, and we carry the head in brown shipping boxes across the Pacific Ocean. U-Hauled to Sacramento, California, 48th Street on the block where the train tracks either start or end depending on where you're looking to go. No way but forward. Our tired limbs take up the burden of dancing, head bobs to lyrics we have yet to call our anthem.

In this new home, we take out the head to use the ears. I learn that listening is how friendships are formed. I play Monopoly on an applewood coffee table and decorate the ears in gold hoops purchased from a Minnesota boutique. I feel like an American girl doll. How wonderfully the body becomes a collectible. Yet I refuse to be commodified. In art class, I insisted on painting my own self-portrait. Drew even the mouth because I was obsessed with art as a means of making myself whole again. Titled it: "Maybe Narcissus Just Missed His Twin Brother." Because I stare in the mirror and she is the only girl I know well enough to love.

My mother says this is home, but the landlord visits every month, and when we leave, he will go to the locksmith and

have the keys changed. In a couple months, a new family will occupy our home and returning would be an act of breaking and entering. We are criminalized for claiming permanence. Memories do not exist if the place does not exist and so identity becomes ambiguous. My present begins to exist without a past.

In the backyard, we perform an immigrant's ceremony: we bury the mouth, then we bury the head. Our chins buried upright in the blackened soil where the seeds of small persimmons refuse to grow. It feels dignified, how we once buried our ancestors in a similar shame back home. We are closer to ourselves now.

How the heat of the porcelain is what allows the shape to survive. The most beautiful things are real things are broken things — my English teacher says "things" is an elusive and unrefined word. I tell her I am sorry. How even my writing becomes another form of apology. On the internet, I type: "how to glue porcelain back together", a search history of proof that I am a fraud in my own medium. Like mother, like daughter, I sit still. This is no longer my story to tell. Someone else draws the self-portrait.

I exist in a culture as a lie. The portrait hangs on the fourth floor in a subsect of the local art gallery. On opening day, I stand in the corner of the room and stare at her—who is me, who is my reflection, who is nothing like me. The sound of feet clap quickly on the hardwood floor as visitors quickly pass through. I draw closer to where their shadows loom over my body. They notice her. How their gazes assign a price and a significance to the same story I tell you now. As I watch, I am quiet, intent on listening to their mindless chatter. I am listening for the words: She is beautiful.

I am beautiful.

Porcelain is translucent when it hits the light.

GET PUBLISHED IN

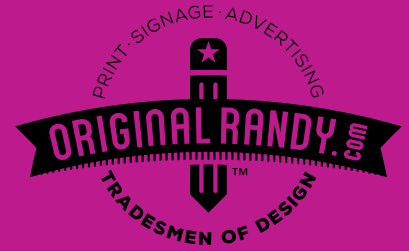


An occasional literary and art journal for anyone interested in the literary and visual arts.

Submit your entries for the next edition of *Ragged Clause* via email to: david@yubasutterarts.org.

For literary works, Word documents are preferred. For visual art, please send .jpegs.

Yuba Sutter Arts
624 E Street
Marysville, CA 95901
530.742.2787
yubasutterarts.org



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WHO WE ARE

Yuba Sutter Arts is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide arts programming, education, advocacy, assistance and service to artists, organizations and all residents of Yuba and Sutter Counties.

The official local agency of the California Arts Council, its programs include:

- Arts in Education
- Arts in Corrections
- Murals of Live Oak
- Veterans Initiative in the Arts
- Art Everywhere with 9 satellite galleries
- Applause Concerts
- World Music and Culture Series
- Cover It! Utility Box Murals
- Scholastic Writing Awards
- Poetry Out Loud
- "Ragged Clause" Journal
- Shakespeare Readers Theater
- Women's Creative Circle
- 3rd Sunday Jazz Jams
- Singer/Songwriter Series
- "Stand As 1" Open Mic Series
- Yuba Sutter Youth Choir
- Veridian String Quartet
- Tri-County Diversity Film Series
- Songwriters' Workshop
- Jump StArts
- Arts Exposure – Field Trips

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