

Carl Cherry Center for the Arts
and
The Monterey Public Library
present:



The Robert Campbell
Monterey County High School
Poetry Awards

2021



"Toy Rocks"

Mari Jacinto, Monterey High School

Third Place • 2021 Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition

Cover Photograph: "South of the Border"

Anthony Miguel, Stevenson School

First Place • 2021 Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition

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Saturday, May 1, 2021

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Carmel High School: Dale DePalatis, Barbara McBride

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Rancho Cielo Community School: Robert Vasquez

Rancho San Juan High School:
Molly Bauer, Natalie Bernasconi, Jordana Henry

Santa Catalina School: Beth Jones

Silver Star Center: Scott Davis

Soledad High School: Miriam Antunez, Azere Wilson



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Scary Thoughts of Grief

I hate the fact that I don't know if I'll ever see you, my guy.

I blame myself

Was I variable to your death?

Russell Road a couple steps from where we lived

Russell Road the road we would always walk by

Russell Road the same

Middle school we would go to

Russell Road the same road they shot and left you dead at

January 18

2 days right after you told me happy birthday

Kiki

I miss you my brotha I would pray

Night and day for your life to get better

I'm sorry I should've done more but I'll

Live this life cuz I know that's what you'll

Want for me

When this life is over I can't wait to see you at those golden gates brotha

Orlando Ahumada
Rancho San Juan High School

People who overpower me

___I hate it when people overpower me
I hate it when people make me do stuff I don't wanna do

I hated getting locked up for the stupidest things
I hated being locked up and woken up at 6:00
I hated it when the weekend came and I never got a visit
I hated having a one minute phone call for loved ones

I hated eating and always being hungry
I hated sleepless nights on cold cement
___I hate it when people overpower me

Frank Alejandre
Rancho Cielo Community School

Where Home Is

I am from a neighborhood engulfed by hills and fields,
from vinegar, baking soda, and lemons.
I am from overgrown gardens spread behind houses.
(Painted, glistening it looked like a forest.)
I am from the cherry blossoms the citrus tree
whose spectacle I remember as time moves on.

I'm from sopes and dark brown eyes,
from Esther and Gerardo.
I am from the hard workers and kind-hearted,
from have fun and be yourself
I'm from Don't you forget
it's my life
it never ends.

I'm from Salinas and Lagunita,
quesadillas and mango tea.
From the long hours my father works
to keep us at ease,
the sacrifices my family faces,
so I don't see.

On a shelf rests a small wooden trunk
packed with a cluster of images,
that lays out fond old memories
to remind me of my lifetime.
I am from those remembrances-
grown before I knew-
flourished from my family's forest.

Mathea Alonzo-Ruelas
Rancho San Juan High School

The Gamble

You put bets on the cards
and they smell just like an abandoned street;
no wonder your pockets feel empty.
You play more,
feeling empty in galore,
hoping to get back what you just lost.

You're never satisfied.
Like the way seasons came,
you came, but you're out.
Home isn't enough for you.
I know you want more...
That is why gambling became your core.

And the question is:
Am I not enough of a gamble?
...that you had to look away,
and took away
what I've been wanting: you.

I get it.
I am not enough to fill your empty street.

You could lose me anytime
And you'd still wonder what you lost.

Aubrey B. Amila
North Salinas High School

Demons

Those thoughts,
Inside your head,
The ones that hurt,
Hurt your soul,
Haunting you,
Everyday,
Making you suffer,
Those,
Are the demons,
The demons,
We all try to escape,
Escaping from their hunger,
Their hunger,
For our happiness.

Leslie Avila
Rancho San Juan High School

It's Not My Fault You Sound Like a Joan Mitchell Painting

I don't know how to tell you this but in the nicest way possible
your voice tastes like the end of the world
It's the cutoff and the silence and the heartbeats and the timing
And the everything the nothing and the in-between

And in all the ways I can't describe
you sound like the flavor of pink
Of sunset and ochre and opal
A taste like cerulean and smaragdine
Shades that sound like the action of running out of time
How can I tell you that you sound like the end of the world?

And on a vinyl record of everything I can never truly mean
A secret to keep in a violescent abditory
The B-Side:
You are pastel on an oil paint canvas that got hung in the back of the Louvre
and I can't afford a ticket
How do you expect me to ignore that?

It's not my fault that your words taste like the most beautiful form of destruction

Gisele Bernahl
Carmel High School

I Care

I care about metal fingers
The ones that leave black ink on the page
Painting paragraphs purely out of poetry

I care about the woman who grew me
From an egg into a human
From a child into a formidable opponent
The one who watered me in her womb
Until she brought me into the world

I care about boys with shaggy brown hair
The ones who like to pack up their things
and leave out of nowhere

I care about pink flowers
Perfect peonies that push out of the soil
I keep them scattered around my room
The space that smells like expensive rose perfume

I care about fuzzy rugs and the color brown
Sweet stifling rain fall
Pounding water into the ground

I care about my worn out shoes
Beat leather and soiled soles
I walked in them from Europe all the way back to you

I care about the letters i keep under my bed
And the love notes i burned
but keep in my head

I care about what is to come
And all of the things that one day
I will wish i had done

Emma Brown
Carmel High School

Where Did My Motivation Go?

I think there was a part of me
That longed for love and life and success
A part that idolized the lies and compromise
I think that part of me is missing.
Gone.
Removed from the premises.
Every now and then it reappears
Decides to make a visit after movies and shows
Wearing a collared blue shirt and a necktie
I greet it with a shaky hand
And make small talk on the deck
An hour or two passes and I mutter a quick excuse
And turn it back around
It's been very nice to see you again
But you really must be going
I know there was a part of me
That made me the way they wanted me to be
But I just sent it walking down the stairs
And he took my motive with him

Giana Buraglio
Carmel High School

Lady Justice

In response to the painting "Salvador Dali"

by Artush Voskanyan

Lady Justice.
There you hang,
Atop the mouth
And the horns of the bull

"Justice is blind"
Or so they say,
So why do you see through the eyes of man?

So why do you turn a blind eye to injustice?
To women, to blacks,
to Asians, to gays?

Does "I can't breathe"
And "stop"
Mean nothing to you,
Like how it did to the men before?

Lady Justice, it's time to get rid of those eyes
For sight cannot equate to justice.

Sophia Cho
Carmel High School

My mom's hands

Aren't smooth.
On her fingertips, are calluses
that have their own stories.

Since she was a little girl,
living in Mexico, my mom
worked at her mother's food establishment.

Everyday, she would
wake up early to go to a mill,
that would break down Maize
so she could make tortillas.

Day in and day out,
she would knead the dough
occasionally burning her hands
on the hot comal.

When she arrived
in the US,
at 20 years old,
she began working
as a house cleaner.

She uses her bare hands
to scrub toilets and cabinets.
She never uses plastic gloves
because she claims they
obstruct her from doing her job.

When I touch her hands,
I feel and remember all the work
She has put in
to give me
a better future.

Carolyn Dorantes
Rancho San Juan High School

Forte dei Marmi

With the marble fortress peering over my shoulders,
I lay on the velvety cushion of a lounge chair,
Listening to the blue waters of the Mediterranean
Dance on the shores of the land Dante called home;

As I slip into the refreshing sea,
Small crabs burrow into the sand
And jellyfish float by benevolently;

The midday sun warms me like my nonna's hugs,
And my skin soaks it all up like olive oil on bread
As I dream about the home cooked banquet awaiting my arrival;

The fresh evening breeze cools me

While I pedal on the cobblestones,
Taking me on a journey through the old town;
The fragrant scent of focaccia lures me toward the town square,
Voices, laughter, and the smell of cigarettes surround me
And I revel in the moment.

Nikos Douros
Carmel High School

Reflection of a Retired Bartender

A Villanelle

It was crazy how they went that far.
They always got aggressive as a jaguar,
As soon as they got faded at my bar.

Jared and Jesus got knives out to spar.
Crazy and mindless as these drunks usually are,
It was crazy when they went that far.

Jax and Joe were Football All-stars!
But were stuck slaving at the old lumberyard,
As soon as they got faded at the bar

That obnoxious group came in all “hardy-har-har.”
Had to kick em out and got a couple of scars,
It was crazy when they went that far.

Jamie Lynne trashed and crashed Jake’s car.
Yet Jake thought the possibility bizarre.
As soon as they got faded at the bar.

I’ve been watching this place from the very start,
And will miss the exciting stories with all my heart.
It was crazy when they went that far,
As soon as they got faded at the bar.

Ralphie T. Francis
Gonzales High School

First Generation, First Born

Everything that I do is not only for me,
It is also for them
It must have been the same thing they were thinking
As they took a chance somewhere else
I learned to work hard from them
To be grateful
To recognize the blessings
To go from being treated like dirt
To plans on owning the land they step in
Constantly moving
Never knowing where I belong
There is no place to call my home
But rather my community
My family
Being strong no matter the circumstance
Taking responsibility
Learning to be independent
Knowing more English than your ancestral language
Being the designated translator
The one thing they can brag about to family across the country
With it also comes the fear of failure and being a disappointment
To be able to have siblings that look up to me
To be an example and make them proud
Yes I do it for myself, but I also do it for them.

Andrea Garcia
Gonzales High School

The pain i speak of

The pain i speak of is not fake
No one can even imagine
What it's like to know the damage that's been done
Ain't no fun when every little thing can set me off in rage
Thinking happy thoughts trying to engage
Unable to feel what it's like to be really happy
This feeling is crappy
Wish it all to end
I can only dream of how it feels to be happy
By the end of the day I'm yelling for help, yet nobody listens
Writing poems to myself so I don't feel alone
The voices in my head don't leave me alone

Carlos Garcia
Rancho San Juan High School

A Young Man's Mind

I was born in a time where my father was looked at as a bad person.

He would do drugs, drink, fight, you name it.

But no one saw him how I did.

I saw him as a mexican father who would provide for his family.

A man who would have dirt and mud on his hands, his clothes, his face

As someone who wanted the best for me.

I was three to four years old when he left.

I still wonder why he left

I still remember him driving away

I still feel that empty hole in my heart he created in me in my mom in our life

A couple years pass. I'm older I'm stronger I'm wiser

And he still hasn't returned and something tells me he will never return

I had to teach myself how to be a man

A young man

As I grew up I made many mistakes and I know there's no one else to blame but myself

But if I would have had my father next to me playing his role as a father

Holding me looking after me stopping me from making them in the first place

I would have been a better man

But now it's too late, I'm seventeen, going to school, playing sports, and working a job

Now he appears here and there only to give me lessons I already know because

I had to learn the hard way

But I listen I see I wait

And I'm not waiting for no reason

I'm waiting for him to tell me himself why he left

Why he didn't come back

Why did he never say sorry

The true story has never really been told to me

For all I know he might not really be my dad

Martin Garcia
Rancho San Juan High School

Imperfect

Consonance Dissonance and the intervals of memory

Minor 2nd

The prick of a needle and the pain that leaves a scar

Major 3rd

Playing board games with friends and sitting around the fire with family

Perfect 5th

The feeling after you score a goal and the weird familiarity of coming home after vacation

Minor 7th

The moment at the top of a roller coaster with excitement and tranquility

Perfect 8th

The power and importance of a car horn but with the sweetness of an Oreo

The sounds that make up the triads of everyday life

Robert Gomez
Carmel High School

Passenger Seat

"Let's go for a drive" I say
Buckling myself into the passenger's seat
I wait for the sound of ignition
And for the wheels to turn
Waiting for the escape of driving endlessly

Windows down and flowing hair
Mac Miller filling the stereo
Laughter is heard over the beating bass
I dip my head back into the rushing wind
And at this moment I feel infinite

Trees flashing by and blue skies above
I roll the windows up and sit in pure bliss
For the stupid stuff doesn't matter anymore
No clue where life is taking us
Just happy to be along for the ride

Alexis Henderson
Carmel High School

Afterlife Effect

"i wonder how far you'll dig deep into my life
once i leave this earth after sharing all my advice
you'll unlock all secrets and you'll keep its
ugly truths of you and the person i was before this
hug all of me and acknowledge what's left to breathe
take in my heart and embrace what was me
whisper in my ear and tell me i was good
as the dominos of pain takes its place and starts to flood
what will you face as you cry on the floor?
to see me with white eyes, cold to the core,
my face purple, a note stained with blood to the left,
draw a circle in the crime scene, pull the belt off my neck
you can't bring me back no i'm gone this time
the anger, the guilt, the sadness all ate my mind
all i cared about was getting rid of myself
because it's so hard to get out of bed and ask for help
it's so hard to face myself every day
to look in the mirror and see myself decay
the flesh peeling off my cheeks while i weep
nothing but a disappointment to myself i'm a freak
trust me i tried waiting for a miracle to come
but i can't wait anymore this isn't fun
after so many years of intense pressure it's only ruined me
but i'm not a diamond yet so maybe there's still time left to retreat"

Chris Hernandez
Monterey High School

The Mexican Neighbor

The Mexican neighbor
One house down
Hard-working man
Does not speak English
Understands living hell
Short
Long beard
Skin of a Reptile
His car
Loud as a lion
Powerful
Muscled
My ears hurt

Darren Hernandez
Silver Star Center

A Vision of Moloch

A shelter made of tarps and bags
Draped in American Flags
Just next-door to the Goodwill® dropoff bin

A village of torn up tents
Down the tracks from a sign that says “for rent”
On an empty building that could house a dozen men

Under steeples that like fingers rise
Against the grey uncaring skies
Accusatory, placing silent blame.

C.J. Hunt
Seaside High School

Remembrance

I remember the white walls so white they were blue
I remember my empty room with nothing but a bed and a desk
I remember the window on our doors for our protection
I remember our visits where we played uno
I remember laundry day (mine was wednesday)
I remember my wardrobe consisting of only long sleeves
I remember when we got to listen to music once a week (it was never enough)
I remember when hair ties were banned on the unit after the pain became too much
for you

I don't remember the rest of the month
I don't remember all the other units I was transferred to
I don't remember getting better

I just know I am

Scarlet Keaton
Carmel High School

Where I'm From

I am from my grandma's pozole; from the laughs
and scolding of my tia carmen.

I am from the "circulo" where all my cousins and
I would race and where I would sit on plants and
pretend they were my throne.

I am from the nopales and roses that my grandpa
loves to grow.

I'm from christmas at my tia rosa's house and
being walked to school everyday by my grandpa;
from my tia carmen

And always being at my
grandma's house.

I am from "vayan a jugar al freeway" and from waking up to
christian music my grandpa plays unnecessarily loud.

I'm from the strawberry fields and freezing
cold mornings.

I'm from the small house in Mexico with a big room painted
bright green and the smell of tortillas de harina my
grandma lupita makes every time we visit.

I come from little things with small memories that hold
a huge place in my heart.

Janessa Lara
Rancho San Juan High School

Honey is Sweeter than Blood

the dissected woman
a study of blood
a painting of honey

not on earth
but across heavens
time will remember

Dali's hands
sweetened with red coral death

a decapitated woman
who said, "blood is sweeter than honey"

everything will decay
but the memory

love will rot his capillaries
and his honey stained viscera

fall in a bed of needles and bloody-eyed creatures
only to be saved by bare skin

and the saint himself
sleeps, an animal lost in space and thought

sent angels but the angels were them
never die in fear, they echoed

she was wrong
what's kept inside is so much sweeter

Americana Sunrise

It's the American dream to breathe while you're dead. It's the Dreams of family houses and not rooms decorated with decaying roses. The dream of a sunrise on the front lawn and your American flag waving high. The nightmare of being forced out of your own home. While there's purses and suits swaying around a grand room in the sky of your dreams. It's the American dream to an Americana girl. Thrown and chewed on the sidewalk, the road. With guns pointed and ready to go, ready to end the dreams of an Americana girl. With her hope behind a cage door and her own blood sickened and lost. The dream of spending nights in rooms brimming with vibrant gowns and pretty people seems to be merely a dream to an Americana girl.

May
Soledad High School

Me?

I stare at the mirror
And she stares back at me
But who is she?
Yén or Jada.
Who am I meant to be?
In this land will I ever be free?
Free to choose both and be pleased.
I will be a true American by discarding Yén,
But is Jada going to be strong enough without her?
I know Yén can't survive here on her own,
so Jada mustn't leave.
Jada can choose whether Yén survives,
But will she?
That is unseen.

Yen Jada Ngo
North Salinas High School

Yo Soy La Hija

Yo soy la hija de un mexicano
La hija trabaja
Limpia, es cocinera, es atleta, un estudiante
Pero en esta casa somos felices
No somos una familia normal
Qué es normal
Is it when we argue who cleaned and who didn't
Is it when we bike together to feel the breeze
Is it when we give each other unlimited support
Or is when we feel at peace reading the Rosario
All families are different
Our culture is what connects us
The beautiful colors of green, white and red

Ashley Ochoa
Gonzales High School

Saturation

alarm clock, check my phone.
walk to school with the morning dove.
open locker, talk to friends.
close locker, PE class.

english class, i can't talk
never could, never will
science class, it's all the same
when will things begin to change?

break time, i scream at me.
cry a bit, then go to math
be too bold, be too smart-
the laughter shuts me up again.

history, he screams at me
my heart crawls out and stares at me
it stares at me like everyone else
the world feels so grey.

lunch time, blue skies,
play card games, then avoid their eyes.
the sun is high, i'm almost there,
the golden light fills my hair.

music class, my heart comes back,
the grey turns into lilac.
my bow runs on my violin,
i wonder where this joy has been.

my soul pours out note by note,
my body frees and begins to float,
the music gives me an embrace
then wipes the tears off my face

school ends, i run home,
The world is now so colorful.

Time Melts Away

Time melts away.

The long school hours,
With nothing to do.
A form of steadiness in the air,
Holding my thoughts together like glue.

Oh, how I wish this day would end,
That I could return home.
Yet, what would I do then?
My whole life suddenly monochrome.

The one thing on my mind,
Not my own life or the time.
But whatever lies out there,
Far away from the monotony and grime.

My mind fills with oceans and mountains,
A land farther away than space.
Yet the time draws me back,
To this tiring, mundane place.

Siri Panetta
Carmel High School

Reality

They yell at her
Because they notice her grades slipping,
How she sleeps all day,
And how she never comes out of her room.
But they don't ask her why
They don't notice how she never smiles,
How she skips meals
Or the disappointed looks when she sees herself in the mirror.
They don't realize she cries herself to sleep.
Because she misses the little girl she was too.

Brittney Perez
Rancho San Juan High School

La frontera

Por encima de la montaña que nos sirve de frontera,
te mando mi alma entera y sincera.

Mamá Marta, te mando un beso y un fuerte abrazo
quete llegue hasta el alma,
hasta que te pueda ver detrás de esa frontera.

De mi abuelita llevo, sus ojos que son color café
como el que ella hacía.

Aquí estoy en otra tierra...extraña
con otro idioma... difícil
en otra cultura... distinta

Mis ojos se humedecen cuando puedo oír su voz.
Tu voz, dulce como la miel, y cálida como el sol
y memorias que mi mamá me decía.

De aquel vestido rojo con que te vestías y
qué linda y coqueta te veías.

Tellamé y no respondiste, mi nana
¿Adónde te fuiste?

Aquella noche del 2015 un último
suspiro tú diste.
Esa noche un aroma a flores
era una señal de que tú te me fuiste.

A mi mamá también se le murió
algo adentro de ella.
Ese día, la tristeza y soledad me
Llegaron, ese día.

No te pude ver, ese día, pero estás en mi
mente y corazón todos los días.

Y yo sé que desde arriba tú nos miras y
nos cuidas.

Meadows

My grandpa lies in a hospital bed alone
No visitors, due to covid
And no one to hold his hand
Coma
Still
Probably cold as ice
Longing for touch
But no life support
It was time
It was time for him to let go but no one else was ready

I was awake when it happened
Midnight
But I didn't know, I was just there
Not knowing for hours
Hours of time passed where I was breathing and he wasn't
Hours of time where I had hope but he was already gone
Hours And he still died alone
He became a meadow with no flowers
Cold as ice, Still
Coma

No more hugs
No more talks
Just a photo on my wall, black and white
And his art in my room

I spend hours driving to his cabin
Hours preparing myself for his absence
Preparing for what once was a meadow, but it no longer has flowers
His chair - empty
The bed - empty
His presence - empty
Photos of him everywhere
Smiling
Posing
It's been months but this is the first trip without a hug goodbye
The best hugs, like a bear
Warm
Tight
Loving
Always

Cole Dahlia Prekoski
Carmel High School

Here He Stands

Here he stands on the edge of existence
Fiery mind breathes red resistance
Russian-born artist Wassily Kandinsky
Paint as rebellion, soon was convinced he
Could express revolution through acrylics of warm,
Planets and cities, abstract in form
Red storm of Jupiter, green mountains looming,
Remnants of WWI, cannons still booming
Orange metropolis, glowing and bright
Shadows of bombings, now out of sight
Vast landscapes of ivory, colorful shapes
Painting provided hopeful escapes
Rage and hostility bred from the war,
Art began healing at the world's core
Here artists stand on the edge of existence
Fiery minds breathing vibrant resistance

Teagan Puryear
Carmel High School

i tell myself it's okay

so well i tell myself it's okay
and i'm okay with the idea of leaving

again

i'm not
i miss each place just a little more each time
i don't know why

maybe because i finally started to listen
i finally took the whole grow where you are planted to heart

but i have now planted so many trees
in so many different spots and the roots are so deep

and the branches so full right as i leave
i seem to have a tall tree right before i go
and when i have gone
it seems even taller

and looks just that much prettier

Alexis Ramirez
Monterey High School

Ice

This World is as cold as ice
people aren't normally nice,
Reminiscing on my life,
Gang Violence through my eyes,
Kids on the block always have to hide,
Mommas Cry all through the night,
Always crazy 'n my city,
People never showing pity,
It's froze like if it snows
Pours like it's rain,
Shines like it's day,
Sorry for the people,
We never got to settle,
Bad things in the dark,
Light goes when it spark,
Something kinda like a star,
See it glancing from afar,
Raindrops on the floor people with a lot of scars,
Haunts from the past,
Thinkin' if it lasts,
Sunlight through the cracks,
Memories like a flash,
If they were really bad,
Visual through the sun,
Critical when its done,
Precision to work hard,
Incision in life cut into two bars,
Walk through a hole,
Felt like a stole,
Something that was bold,
Even when it's cold.

All-in-One

From my father, a hard worker,
Providing for his family.
No matter the time or day,
He pushes through.
I take over his determination.

From my mother, a beauty
With big, beautiful features.
The dark brown eyes
That glow in the sun.
Her bright smile
That grins through the toughness.
I resemble her.

From my grandmother who is very truthful
She never lies, she sips her coffee
And rolls her eyes.
Minding her business,
Always speaking the truth
To those she loves.
I portray her actions.

I have learned I am all of them
In one.

Selena Rose Renteria
Gonzales High School

RBG

Tough, notorious RBG:
pure strength, passion, and sensibility.
Foreseeing justice through venturesome lenses
of compassionate truth and decisive intention.

Five feet and one inch of grit, vision, and wisdom,
a harbinger of freedom, a cause to believe in.
Now, it must be my one greatest dream
to grow to a height of one inch and five feet.

She twirled baton in her public school—
a minor detail, but nonetheless cool.
It stands out to me, like a beckoning clue,
that my mother twirled baton in her younger years too.

With each sturdy step through the Harvard halls
in her high-heeled shoes, a wonder to all,
she crushed to a hush the persistent illusion
of a man's world,
and devised a solution.

“Shall not any state deny to any person
the equal protections,” said the Constitution.
The term “any person,” if this truth is to be,
extends to us women,
said RBG.

Her dissenting opinions left hopeful direction
to a new generation that demands your attention—
We Dissent.

A force to empower,
A guide like no other,
A wife,
A daughter,
A leader,
A mother.

A woman,
in her own right
phenomenal.

Amelia Rodolf
Pacific Grove High School

Two Haiku

So lonely, the tracks
Remembering old dead times
Only memories

My destination
Far from you I ride alone
Knowing you're not here

Eduardo Salvador
Rancho San Juan High School

Caged Bird

A caged bird am I
The virus my sweet captor,
Vaccine let me fly

Sadie Santos
Rancho San Juan High School

Closure

There's a moment when the world fades away
You sit there, headphones clutched to your ears as if to press yourself closer to
the sound
Strains of soft piano, a subtle enhancement to the crackling static of the empty
world beyond
Your eyelids slip closed, you inhale deeply, drinking in the gentle melody with every
part of you
You sit at the edge of the living room couch, and you are on the verge of
something beautiful

You stand, your eyes falling lightly open as a driving beat joins the melody
Every pulse thrums through your body, and you begin to walk
Your fingers slide over the curve of the doorknob, and the icy metal
is nothing more than a murmur as you relinquish your grasp
Bare feet crunch over fallen oak leaves coating the ground as the pure tone of a
synth glows beneath the piano

As the music builds, you feel a deep thrum in your chest rising to mirror the music
Trancelike, the natural world buzzes past around you, and you do not hear a single
moment of it
Strings swell in that beautifully familiar manner, and you step out from
beneath the trees
Beneath the open sky, layers upon layers of instrumentation interweave in a
pattern you know more intimately than your own mind

The dry grass prickles and abrades the soles of your feet, and you could not be
less aware
Tones and harmonies dive and dance in a whirl of wonder, bouncing from ear to ear
and echoing through every darkened corner of your mind
In this moment, wind curling around your exulting form, you know what it is to
be truly free
An impossibly powerful emotion fills you as the crescendo peaks and the
chords resolve, and it has no name save
Euphoria

Owen Shirrell
Carmel High School

Age is Just a Number

When you're young
Age is like infinity
Really, really big
You know it's out there
You know it grows
But it seems so imaginary
Impossible

Now age feels like an inequality
Just at the edge of over or under
Seeming to change with new factors
Unequal to my wise elders
Unequal to my hungry youngers

It builds and it builds and
It aches your bones and it erodes your mind
And when you reach the end, it's just
"That's it?"

All that time
Wasted on reaching that one sideways eight
Enduring all that
Struggle, racism, homophobia, hate
For a fancy box
To spend eternity in?

Fixated on that eight
For my whole life
Never looking anywhere else?
Never living
Until it's too late?

No. One day I'll reach infinity
But for now I think I'll toe the edge
And live my seventeen

Audrey Tran
North Salinas High School

Can't Hold Me Down

Covid is boring
Ya feel me
I can't party anymore
Missing all my homies
Fuck these masks on god
Heard this new song by Cutty
Shit was a banger
Rollin' thru the city
A henny in my hand
Slappin' all those bangers
Makin' these money moves
Ain't boring
From the Bay to L.A.
U can't hold me down Covid

Zahra Whitten
Silver Star Center

Kandinsky's Workshop

A painter's workshop
The colorful contours dance
On a slate of mauve

A single figure
Contemplating the angles
Of his final stroke

Drawings on the wall
Musings of the active mind
The meaning unknown

A tear shaped window
The dazzling moon departed
In the black of night

For a brief moment
He stands on the brink of time
The next he is gone

Tyler Wiederanders
Carmel High School



"Self Portrait"

Lauro Borquez, Monterey High School

Honorable Mention

2021 Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition



"Covid Clones"

Sean Seggerty, Stevenson School

Honorable Mention

2021 Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition



"Pieces of Me"

Ashley Mayer, Carmel High School

Honorable Mention

2021 Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition



"Candy Cane Lane"

Nubia Serrano, Monterey High School

Honorable Mention

2021 Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition



"Ellis of Monterey"

Hayley Armstrong, Carmel High School

Second Place • 2021 Thinking Out Loud Regional Art Exhibition