

The Rockford Review

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About Our Cover:

Surrealism is a style of art and literature that plays games with our subconscious minds. It embodies an incongruous arrangement of impressions beyond (sur) what we commonly consider to be the real deal. In other words, it is a patchwork quilt of the human condition. On windy wintry days ahead, let us wrap ourselves in the quilted covers of this book and welcome its blizzard of contents to blow our minds. -- *David Ross, Editor*

About Our Artists:

Jessica Rose Witte, DeKalb, IL (Cherry-flavored soap legs)-- "This digital photograph stemmed from my working method for sculpture. Using non-traditional materials, an absurd layering of information has been created. The work aims at surrealism's 'strangely familiar.' It is presented in a straightforward manner, but the meaning is concealed in the manipulation... I was thinking about making a figure 'pure' and more attractive, more fit for consumption. Flavored soap--you are punished and rewarded for putting it in your mouth. The pink is really vibrant, the soap will even sweat and smell sweeter if the room is warm..."

Kandie Bott, Roscoe, IL (Angel-eyes)-- "Having always been fascinated with the beauty of cats' eyes, 'super-model' Angel allows us to look deeply into hers... There is something ethereal in her Siamese lines...Microsoft Picture It! Illusions was used to bring out her 'heavenly' look."

Joe LoPresti, DeKalb, IL (Yellow and red)-- "What currently draws me to paint is activity. I feel most comfortable simply working with materials, instead of relying on some level of representation or content. When pouring paint onto a surface, I become strictly fascinated by the comparison of what I expect will happen, and the visceral nuances unforeseen. The relationship between my actions and the actions of the paint itself has overwhelmed all other intentions in Painting."

Amy Willis, Riverside, CA (Hands on head)-- "My interest in surrealism began after I had already started drawing. My dad brought up the comparison of the dream-like images in my drawings to those of Salvador Dali, so I looked up some of his work and became more interested. Now Dali is one of my biggest inspirations in art, along with Kandinsky and Pollock for my more abstract works."

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Jo Van Arkel
Springfield, MO

The Desire for Things We Cannot Have

I am so lonely I feel like dancing. I am lying by a pool. The roar of the wind is constant and clouds zoom past like cars overhead. I'm wishing I could climb inside one of them and drive away with the wind. Somewhere in the city my twin daughters are playing, but I am much too far away to hear their laughter. They will be gone for hours.

My husband suspects me of having an affair, but I'm only drinking too much and making up stories in my busy little head. I ask you, is this faithlessness? I'll admit I've fallen in love, but I've kept it a secret so far, even from the one I love and the worst that's come of it is that it makes the sunlight painfully bright and the sky is very, very blue to my eyes lately. I wear dark sunglasses to lessen the effect.

There is a box turtle swimming in the pool. His head strains above the water line, and I watch as his legs paddle rhythmically. He is like a little mechanical toy. Any minute I will rescue him. I can't imagine how he fell in, but I was sleeping one moment and when I next opened my eyes, there he was, in over his head and without even a sound, desperately swimming to save his life.

And desire, of course. I am suddenly aware of desire, how it is everywhere, heavy and sweet like the humid summer air. I can see it on people's faces, even the oldest and saddest people, like the old women I see walking alone to the grocery stores pulling their little metal carts behind them. Say I am whizzing past in my car, and I see just such an old lady walking. Even if she is trying with all her might to hold her face perfectly blank, I can see her loneliness and longing around her like an aura. I want to pull over and pick her up and take her to wherever she's going, the way people around here are always pulling over to rescue turtles during their annual migration so that they might not get smashed by the wheel of a car but live to see another season of new spring foliage and feel anew that basic urge to mate.

This is another thing I've become especially aware of since falling in love. Everywhere I look I see things that are about to get run over or people falling away, falling apart. Today in the paper, I read about a woman across town whose baby was burned to death in a fire. They have a picture of her, she is running towards me, her mouth open and screaming though I can't hear a sound. Next to this I discovered that a man drowned just yesterday in a city pool with 200 people swimming all around him and a dozen tanned, teenage lifeguards watching. Then later, I am driving down a busy street and I see a baby bird in the midst of the roadway--silly of me to even care, I think when I look back in my rearview

mirror hoping that no one will hit it. Stop caring, stop caring, stop caring!

I am at a friend's pool. She is out of town, and I come everyday to water her plants and keep her automatic chlorinator full. This is good for me because here I can figure out how to save myself from being in love and stop caring and stop drinking all at once. And I want to do all these things very much. Because I am starting to suspect this is about addiction more than love, but I am not willing to outright admit this yet. Before I had this pool to come to, I used to drive around in my car, drive in circles and get lost sometimes. Now I can stay in one place. I go only from the lounge chair to the pool. In the pool, I float on a raft. The current from the filter pushes me ever so gently around. It gives me a great relief for a short time.

The turtle is swimming near the steps. Now would be a very good time to save him; he is within easy reach. But I am at this very same moment, shot through with a thought. It is not quite up to the surface of words. But it has something to do with holding back, keeping a hold on something, with secrets, and telling and not telling. I know I'm not ready to tell the whole story.

My loneliness is growing. So I get up from the lounge and save the turtle. It is a very simple gesture. I stand by the steps, reach into the water and lift him out with one hand. He is good sized and must have lived for a long time. The sun is unbearably bright. "How did you get yourself into this?" I ask aloud. He is perfectly still on the concrete, stunned.

I will go inside and fix another drink. When I come back out, I'll watch the turtle to see where he goes. I know that someday I'll figure all of this out.

I have published in several literary magazines including Northwest Review, The Literary Review, Sou'wester, Potato Eyes and others.