

# *The Agathist*

Issue 12  
Spring 2023



# The Agathist

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*ISSUE 12*  
*SPRING 2023*  
*GERMANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL*  
*409 CALHOUN PARKWAY*

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# Advisor's Note

MR. DICKSON

When the staff was assembling this particular edition of *The Agathist*, everyone kept commenting on the breadth of content. Lots of sadness, lots of happiness. Just stroll through the pages and see!

But isn't life like this? Think about your own life, your own days. Think about the elation and the heartbreak that your world juggles. The tragedies and the triumphs. The deaths and the laughter.

Over the years, I've come to see each edition of *The Agathist* as a compressed snapshot of Germantown High School's collective emotional state. *Complex* and *layered* are the words that always come to mind, and this edition is no different.

The Mississippi writer Richard Wright began writing haiku poems toward the end of his life, and I ran across this gem of his the other day: "How melancholy/ That these sweet magnolias/ Cannot smell themselves." It is indeed sad that sometimes the givers of beauty--the sunset, the magnolia tree, the starlings singing in the treetops--can't see the art they create. Thankfully, we humans are immune to this blindness. Even in pain, we create wonder. Enjoy this spring edition of *The Agathist*, and thanks for reading!

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## Rudiments

CANNON WILLIAMS

The door creaks open, and a pale young man shuffles in slowly. As he walks over to the kit, his feet drag arrhythmically across the floor, an uneven tempo of squeaks and steps. The leather stool has a well-worn impression in it, accrued over years of sessions and practices. Holding a pitcher of ice water he came into the room with, he sets it down on a table beside the drum kit. He draws the two sticks out of his pocket like bows from a quiver, taking one in each hand. Exhaling heavily, he begins to play.

He starts with the basics. Lightly tapping the toms, softly testing the snare and hi-hats. Once the entire kit passes his inspection, he starts with a simple beat, one of the first he ever learned, a relic from an earlier time where playing the drums was simply a hobby of his own. Slowly, the tempo speeds up. 80. 100. 120. 140. The sticks fly wilder and wilder, as if they were slowly obtaining minds of their own. A single bead of sweat rolls decisively down his face, passing his strained eyes and then his clenched teeth. He keeps scaling up the tempo, striving for an even higher pace. The cymbals become a blur of gold, droplets of sweat vibrating off the drums as he hits them. 220. 240. 260. 280.

300.

He reaches the goal of his session at long last, 300 beats per minute. Stiffness courses through his wrists, his elbow and shoulders aching at their joints. His teeth wince from the strain, but he continues to play regardless. His sweat soaked shirt swings loosely over his body as he continually reaches for the next beat to play. His face is an array of emotions, a confusing combination of pain, determination, and anger. The palms of his hands have become raw, skin rubbed off via the wood of the sticks. A trail of blood ebbs down the stick, firing off droplets that stain the clean white surfaces of the toms. His playing slowly starts to falter, erratically hitting the drums, entirely forgetting about the kick drum, his sticks nearly falling from his hands.

He comes to a sudden stop, and lets out a grunt of anger, punching a hole clean through the snare drum. After a realization of what he did,

he slumps down in the stool, panting heavily from the exertion. He turns the palm of his hand towards himself, surveying the harsh red landscape of skin. He reaches for the ice water, plunging a hand in, transforming the cool white into a murky red. After drying his hands off, he stands up and walks into a closet adjacent to the room, returning with a near identical, new snare drum. He sets it down in its proper place, picks up the blood-stained sticks, and again begins to play.



## The Gate

GABBY CARAWAY, OILS

## Beignets For Days

ZOË THORNTON, ACRYLIC PAINTING



## Coffee Prose Pose

ZOË THORNTON, COLORED PENCIL

## Little Apartment on McDowell

GABBY MATTHEWS

Everybody in the Thomas-Jackson family remembers the two bedroom apartment that sits at the front of the apartment complex. The variations of warm smelling colorful flowers laying comfortably in a bed, bordering the apartment. As you walk into the house you are greeted by a warm smile from my grandmother as she asks you if you were hungry. Grandma would never let anyone sit in her house with an empty stomach. If you're anything like me, you'd never turn down Grandma Gladys's cooking. As a child I'd live with my grandma because we were basically inseparable. Being in the presence of her and her little apartment brought a sense of happiness to my body. Beware though, it never stayed one temperature in there. Either she was shivering with goosebumps or burning up eager to turn off the heater.

At the early hours of 11-1 o'clock nobody better touch her remote. Her drama filled "stories" and the news are coming on soon. As I eat my fresh bowl of cinnamon oatmeal that we shared every morning, I'd take in the drama between the Newman family even though I didn't quite understand the concept of cheating. Lunch soon came around in the Little Apartment on McDowell. That meal was always my choice since she insisted, we eat healthy brown sugar and cinnamon oatmeal. I never really wanted to eat out while living with my grandma because her cooking was always my favorite. "What's for lunch today granny" I'd ask every day at about the same time. The meals she'd cook in that little old stove would make you think it had come from a million dollar oven. Lunch would usually consist of something like a baked potato or her famous salmon croquettes. We'd sit at her beautifully polished wooden table and share our food, which is our little thing that I will always hold dearly to my heart.

Being her little helper was my favorite thing in the world. In her little apartment she had a spare room that used to be my mom's where she puts together beautiful floral arrangements. She taught me which flowers and colors went together. Although I was around of 5 and could barely form a paragraph. When it was time to switch out the flowers of the season, we'd go to that little room and go crazy with flowers.

She'd tell me stories on how she'd send my dad out to "illegally" get moss off random trees. Every day I thank God he didn't get in trouble for that. After we put together an arrangement, we'd find the perfect place for it to sit or hang in her little apartment. It's the little moments like this that I cherish so much that it brings tears to my eyes.

It has been almost 10 years since that little apartment on McDowell has been standing without her special touch. 10 years since we shared our daily bowl of oatmeal and salmon croquettes. 10 years since I felt her warmth. 10 years since she was taken away from me. Every day I think about the moments we shared and hope that one day we can pick up where we left off. Everybody remembers and misses that little apartment on McDowell. It is filled with warm memories, amazing food, and the best nightly cuddles with Granny Gladys. Oh, how much do I miss that little apartment. It never leaves my mind.



## Georgia

ADDISON ROVOLI, OILS

## The Precious Gem of Life

CEAMBER JEFFERSON

I hold very tight to this precious gem,  
For sweet life is the greatest gift of all.  
It's cherished always, from beginning to end  
Strong bonds that endure and will never fall.

It's hard for a parent to watch them grow  
Tiny hands slowly evolve into adulthood.  
Many try to remain cool and go with the flow  
We can't stop times march even if we could.

Instead, we must show trust in the child  
Give her the space to learn even by falling.  
Resisting the urge to run away and hide  
As we learn to enjoy every fall and spring.

One sad day thy nest will seedily be empty  
Horde the memories, be sure to have plenty.



## Sore Loser

ZOË THORNTON, ACRYLIC PAINTING

## Avid Hunter

ZOË THORNTON

if only i knew the last time i'd be on top of the world.  
my father's sun-spotted shoulders  
my tiny hands grasping beneath his prickly chin  
i knew that if the water were to rise,  
he'd keep me safe and dry,  
way up there.

i'd sleep between him and my mom.  
the sunrise cutting through the blinds and leaving specks on the carpet  
the house remained silent  
i watched the tattoos on his back rise and fall with each breath  
my only job was to pretend to massage his shoulders,  
to wipe down the kitchen table with a wet rag,  
to pick up trash before he mowed the lawn.

i wish i could have recognized the last time i was his daughter.  
the early raven morning, helping me cross the river to the deer stand.  
a beautiful stag, six points of mossy bone and full of fresh, dewy grass.  
behind him, a fawn speckled with frost.

i cried, at such a ripe age.  
i couldn't pull the trigger, i didn't want to make a mistake.  
more afraid of the punishment or more afraid of the patricide?  
he told me it would be okay.  
he forgave me so easily, so unexpectedly.  
"it's all a learnin' experience, midget."



## Tuckered Out

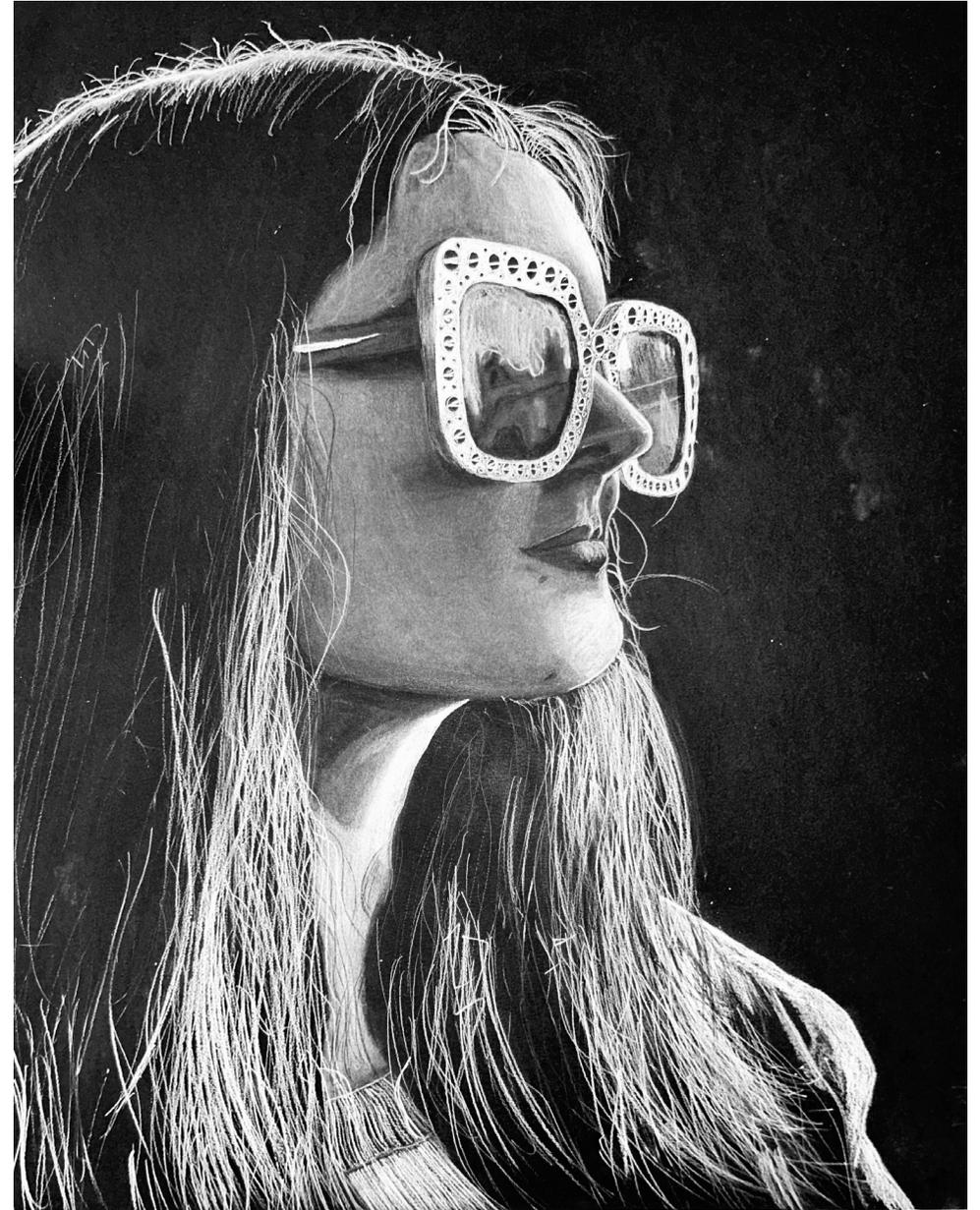
ZOË THORNTON, SCRATCHBOARD



## Ode To Julia

KINSLEY POOLE

Oh Julia. My beloved Julia.  
Your sweet eyes are like molasses,  
And your smile radiats for miles.  
The way your hair washes over your shoulders  
Is enough to make a grown man  
Fall to his knees  
The Sound of your little giggles  
Overcrowd my mind.  
When all i can think about is you,  
There's nothing else i need.  
Everything pales in comparison  
To your unrivaled beauty.  
Your tempting gaze meets mine  
And a chill runs down my spine.  
But then, your honeycomb voice  
Warms me right back up.  
Your intelligence is beyond me.  
I can only hope  
That you'll stoop down to my level.  
Julia, bless me with your beautiful mind.  
I pray at the shrine of your body.  
You are my salvation.  
When everything in the world seems forsaken,  
It is you, Julia, that lifts me up above it all.  
With you, I am strong.  
Without you, I am weak.  
I need you more than the oxygen I breathe.  
For a long time, I thought I had no purpose.  
Now, I have found that my purpose is you.  
I was put on this world to worship you.  
To praise all that you are.  
To serenade you.  
To care for you.  
Julia, you are my North Star.  
You are my World.  
You are everything to me.



## Reflections on the Bay

ALAINA EASLEY, WHITE CHARCHOL AND CHALK



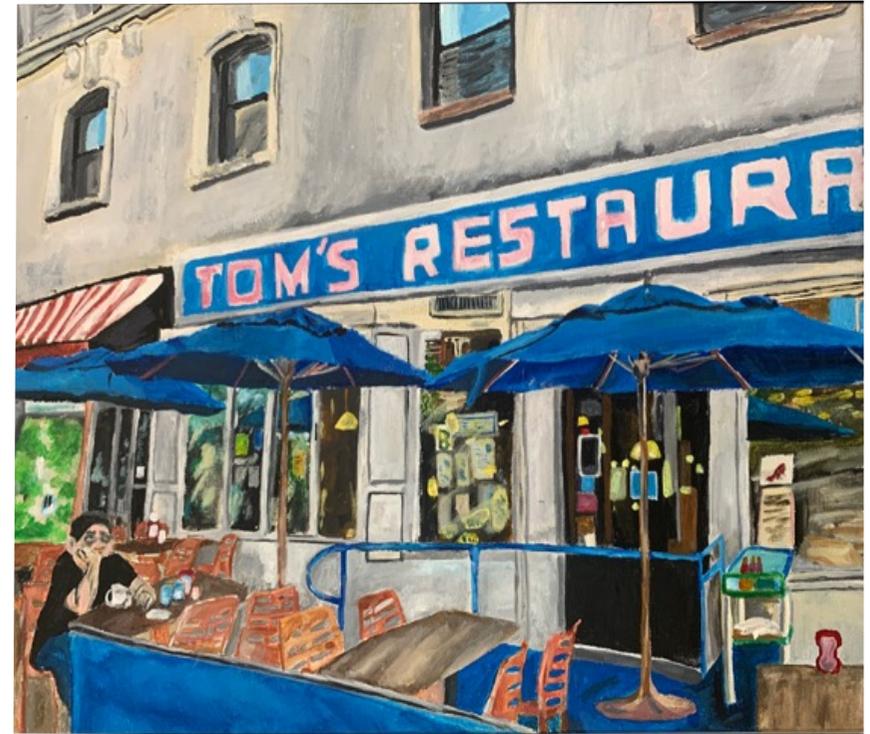
## Mirroring Admiration

KALYB JAMES, WHITE CHARCOAL

## Late Night; Early Morning

LEO TINGLE

Your voice now not yours, speaking less or more,  
How strange it always was to me, the change,  
Fallen down on the floor, not even sore,  
Beyond my weak range, my hearts silent rage,  
There I dragged you, wishing you would come to,  
The couch so far, my strength never on par,  
In my love I knew, I would forgive you,  
Morning in the car, back to who you are,  
You don't remember, the voice an ember,  
Thoughts simmer, somehow your eyes are dimmer.



## Upper West Side

MARY WALKER, ACRYLICS

## No Evil

ARIEL MORRIS

Can you see?  
All the pretty flowers you  
Tarnished on your way to  
Olympus,  
The graves you stepped over  
The stained glass you shattered?

Can you hear?  
The now silent mockingbird,  
Orpheus' voice becoming still  
Replaced with the deafening booming  
Of rain drops on the ground?

Can you speak?  
For the infant who cried to be held,  
For the people you called animals and locked  
Away in cages,  
For the hungry mouths of people you let  
Roam the streets?  
Can't you do that? For them?



## Flowers From Dad

EMMA SCHIRMER, COLORED MARKERS

# Not Another Love Poem

ANONYMOUS

**(CW: domestic abuse)**

Your little “love marks” look a lot like bruises.  
I can’t mess up or else I’ll regret it for days.  
I once laughed at the pain, but now it’s not so funny.  
If I say the wrong thing, the walls shake with your yelling.  
You know I hate that feeling, but do you even care?  
Why do you express your love this way? What did I do to deserve this?  
You tower over me. I’m so much smaller than you,  
but you like that, don’t you?  
You use your hands as your weapons.  
The same hands that hold me close.  
Finally, I pull away, it’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done.  
But you don’t even care. You move on to my best friend.  
I still see you every day and that fear still fills inside me.  
I hate you with everything in me. I despise hearing your name.  
I hate the way you look at me. The look that makes me care.  
Your twisted smile that likes my pain. Your sick head filled with tricks.  
Remember when your friends were daring each other to touch me?  
You heard them, right?  
I know you did, because you laughed with them.  
You weren’t scared of anything because you KNEW I’d defend you.  
I hear the way you talk about me.  
You don’t seriously think I can’t, do you?  
The disgusting look on your face when you know how much you hurt me.  
The vulgar words you use hit me like your hands used to.  
If your momma heard you talking like that, I know how she’d react.  
She wouldn’t hit you or yell, she would just break down and cry.  
What made you like this? I know she raised you right, but you don’t care.  
You’re blind to anyone who cares about you. You hurt everyone around.  
So, it’s time I said the word. Abuse is what you did to me.  
Physically and emotionally. You truly messed me up.  
How could you do that to a girl who just wanted your love?  
How do you sleep at night knowing how much you hurt me?  
I bet you sleep great because you only care about yourself.  
I want to kick and scream, but not because you traumatized me.  
But because you can’t recognize that you’re abusive.

And because I’m so great but to you I’m just useless.  
Or because no matter what I still make up excuses.  
Every time you’re in my life you just feel intrusive.  
I don’t want you anymore. Stay OUT of my life.  
All you’ll ever be to me is a sharp, addictive knife.  
I can’t believe I made a promise to one day be your wife.  
Your love wasn’t hard, it was cold, dark, and strife.  
I deserve better, and maybe you can’t see that.  
I’m finally at peace, now that this love is falling flat.  
Maybe in the future one day we can meet up and chat.  
Right now, I’m done with you, and that’s where I’m at.

**Advisor’s note: if you or someone you know are suffering in an abusive relationship, tell a teacher, a parent, a counselor, or some trusted adult. We can help, but you have to let us know.**



## Keep an Eye Out

NATHALIE PADILLA, ACRYLIC

## Bubble Gum Ribs

RYAN HARPER

I have a nasty habit of falling in love with my best friends.  
It's the most medieval torture,  
To be strangled by your own heartstrings.  
You can never stop loving them  
And you can never love them any less.  
You learn that the heart is a wild, untamable creature—  
Feral  
And natural.  
Why else would we call our ribs cages?

And my rib cage is held together with bubble gum,  
Stale and stringy and old  
Like plastic, like rubber, coating my chest.  
The kind of gum you chew because it's there,  
Because you're bored,  
Because you need something to do.  
The kind that if you chew long enough, it hurts.

My heart is held back with bubble gum ribs.  
Maybe this time, it won't break out  
And break me.

I put too much faith in these bubble gum ribs.

## Tempered Glass

KAITLYN ROBINSON

Her body's made of tempered glass.  
She has a tough cover for her frail body  
Which has cracks all over,  
But she never shatters into pieces.  
I wish I knew how she is so tough  
And can endure all the pain inflicted,  
But my heart breaks for her as well  
Because her tempered glass body is cracked beyond repair.



## Shimmer

JUNO FULGHAM, WHITE CHARCOAL



## Frog

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MARY ROBERTSON, PHOTOGRAPHY

## The Fall

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LEE FAUL

I feel like my words drift.  
They drift further than my mouth  
and deeper than my toes.  
So deep that my brain seeps out to catch up.  
I ooze flesh, spongy meat, and subtly fissured bones  
only for them to end up drifting lower than what I'm chasing.

And as I drift, I look up.  
Up at the words that shine and flutter as they fall.  
It's disgustingly beautiful.

The ooze begins to fade and my flesh is processed,  
soon my bones will settle under silt.  
Sitting solid in someone's stomach like kidney stones.  
I can feel myself peeling away, the words that I chased  
rot away and my being leaves with it.

The words are no longer important  
No longer beautiful  
No longer gross

And I have realised that in this process,  
of trying to keep from drifting.  
I sank.

## Systemic Pain in My Side

BELLE CLEM

I've put the world on mute:  
chalking it up as  
disinterested.

Carving a life out of my waiting,

The walls humming a tune of  
loneliness and mold exposure,  
The pillars collapsing  
beneath the weight of this terrible summer light

And still, it seems to be my own hand  
Which turns the volume higher?

Now I raise this hand to swat away the mosquitoes,  
unavoidable in their ambush

And I sit,  
watching.

the sun go down,  
inflamed as appendicitis  
over central Mississippi—subsiding,  
cooling,  
into a flat beige sea.

Stumbling through this life  
Like an untied shoe  
Someplace between  
Running and rooting

Wanting little more than escape,  
I am orphaned each time this sun goes down.



## Seaside Summers

BAY WATKINS, COLORED PENCIL

# Ten More Years

ALAINA EASLEY

It's been ten years.

It's been ten years since I first  
had those headaches.  
Since I've had that pressure  
in that car.

Ten years when I walked into that office  
worried about a shot.  
When the real reason was so much more  
surreal and scary.  
Ten years since I could remember  
anything from before.  
Before the rare diagnosis that  
luck gave to me.

Ten years since my brain wanted to move  
somewhere with room.  
Somewhere that was bigger  
and more developed.

Ten years since seeing my mom's face  
trying to hold back an emotion.  
I didn't know at the time,  
but it was fear.

Ten years since I first understood  
the concept of death.  
Ten years since I asked Dad,  
"Am I going to die?"

It's been ten years.

Ten years since that big group hug  
as soon as I walked into that classroom.  
Since I got all the letters and notes

Ten years since I gave my life to Him  
and getting dunked under the water.  
Coming up from that pool  
fresh and born anew.

Ten years since I left that building  
and never had to go back.  
Only the yearly check-ins and scans  
remained now.

Ten years of a permanent mark  
on my head and neck.  
A mark hidden so well  
that nobody would even notice it.

Ten years of a cultivated story that shares  
the highs and the lows.  
The rollercoaster of emotions, friendships,  
and even locations.

Ten years of a healthy and loving life  
for a beloved family member.  
A family member who, although he left in fall,  
is running in the fields with his best friend.

...

It's been ten years  
since I had that surgery.  
Years since I was diagnosed  
with Chiari Malformation.

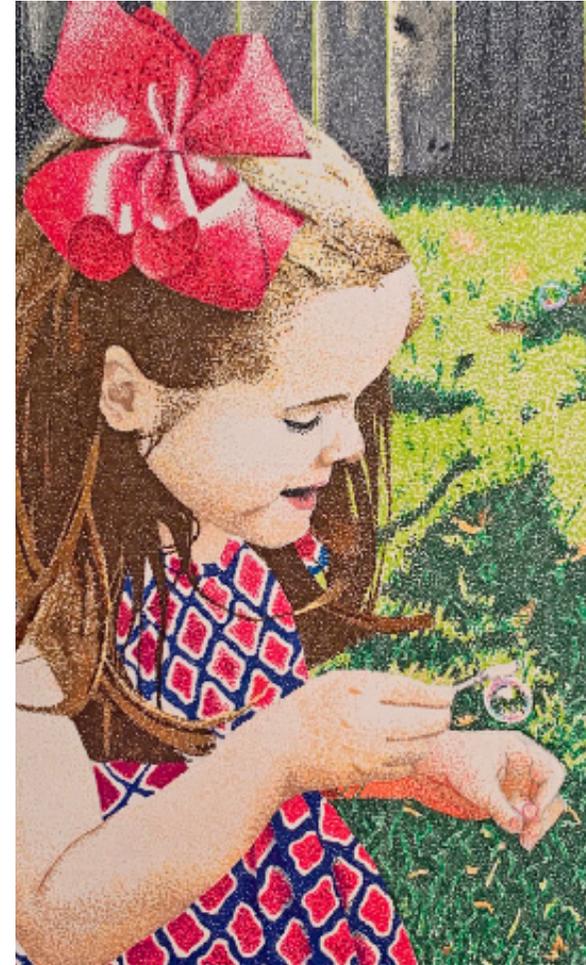
Nothing has come back or changed  
since that day in August.  
Still, it's a constant thought in my head,  
"Is it really all okay now?"

It's been ten years.  
And I'm looking forward to ten more.



## Tres Leches

ANNELISE ROBINSON, PEN AND MARKER



## Bubbles and Bows

BAY WATKINS, COLORED MARKERS