

UnBound

DECEMBER 2019 | ISSUE 2



Nabeela Mahboob, "The Beauty Bestowed Upon Us" (2019)

About UnBound

Unbound is a fully online magazine created in 2019 by Ohio-based musician, writer, and creative Lashonda Love. This magazine seeks to create a space for feminine, nonbinary, and transgender voices and creative works as direct opposition to the frequent cis-male gatekeeping in professional creative communities.

The initial project can be found on [Daisie.com](https://daisie.com), with up-to-date submission calls and guidelines for current issues posted both on the Daisie project and on the UnBound Zine website at unbound-zine.com.

Any and all inquiries can be sent to the UnBound Team at unboundzine@gmail.com with the subject line "UnBound Zine".

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About This Issue

ISSUE NO. 2/DECEMBER 2019

The holiday season is a time filled with passion and emotions for many reasons. For this issue, creators were called to submit work related to any of four categories themed around the holiday season:

- Gratitude
- Abundance/Scarcity
- Consumerism
- Religious freedom (especially in regards to the holidays)

The UnBound team is incredibly grateful that all of our collaborators found themselves able, during this busy time of year, to create and submit the beautiful and thought-provoking works found on the following pages.

If you would like to be featured in a future issue of the zine, please visit unbound-zine.com/submissions or email unboundzine@gmail.com.

With gratitude,

Lashonda Love
Creator/Editor/Publisher

Rebecca Kittle

SHE/HER

GROUNDING IN GRATITUDE

Gratitude is a space – it is either ignored or occupied. It's an energy, an emotion, a frequency, a vibe. It's real, and it really works in healing. There's a ton of scientific evidence that proves how much stronger the frequencies are in the heart space versus the brain, as well as how intricately connected these two areas are at influencing one another.

Gratitude... it's physical, emotional, and some call it spiritual. The closest interpretation of gratitude, physically manifested, is the experience of overwhelming joy: warmth expands across and broadens the chest; an amazing sensation widens the mouth while the eyes spread and ever-so-slightly moisten. It almost feels like you're lifted a centimeter off the ground and out of body for a fractionary second of golden bliss! The emotional frequency of gratitude vibrates in higher energetic waves (think radio waves – ish) than lower, negative emotions like sadness.

On the spiritual front, let me address an important misconception. I get that in certain religious and community

circles, gratitude is overplayed and even misused as a blanket methodology to stifle desires, dismiss requests and other serious assaults to exclude the individual voice, especially those that are different. "Just be thankful for what you have" ... "Be grateful we let you in here" ... "Appreciate that you're not worse off" ...

While these are unfortunately real examples of an approach to the application of gratitude, that's not its true essence. Like any bastardization of a concept, these grossly miss the mark. And that's okay; we're all human and working out this thing called life. Forgive them, if you want, and/or focus on how this is useful for you.

The reason I practice and teach the importance of gratitude is because I'm so easily lost in darker emotions. As a child, I suffered from anxiety and depression at a pretty early age (9). As a Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) and intuitive empath, I'm incredibly attuned to my own inner world and others' pain. The world is full of suppression, oppression, injustice and all things related. So, if you're sensitive, like me, it's overwhelming and tough to just "snap out" of it.

Grounding myself in gratitude created a safe space for me to retreat, a sanctuary of love to dip into regularly, to remind

myself there are good people in the world and good things happening around me. It's literally saved me and shaped the way I view and live my life.

3 Simple Practices I recommend.

– **Morning & Evening Ritual:** close your eyes and recall 3 things for which you're grateful. Repeating daily for a week+ trains the brain's pathways to default to gratitude over negativity.

– **Write a Letter:** choose someone in your life (past, present or future) to pen a heartfelt thank you note. If you're feeling particularly courageous, contact them and read it aloud.

– **Make a Donation:** of food, your time, old belongings, a skill or good ole cash. Actively giving to someone else creates a ripple effect and an energy exchange that carries far beyond you.



Rebecca Kittle is a writer, wellness educator and creative marketer from Columbus, Ohio. She devoted her mid-20's-to-30's-decade delving into the delicious food and diverse culture of New York City. After experiencing physical burn out in the Manhattan business world, she discovered a deep need for self-care and a healthier lifestyle that would honor her personal sensitivities.

She now loves empowering others to do the same while expanding their authenticity, shifting into balance and deeper fulfillment. Optimism is on the horizon as she looks forward to what unfolds in the next decade of travel, cooking, creating and getting lost in nature as often as possible!

For more information about her wellness, writing and marketing services, email her at rebeccasuekittle@gmail.com
website: www.rebeccakittle.com

Al DiLorenzo

THEY/THEM

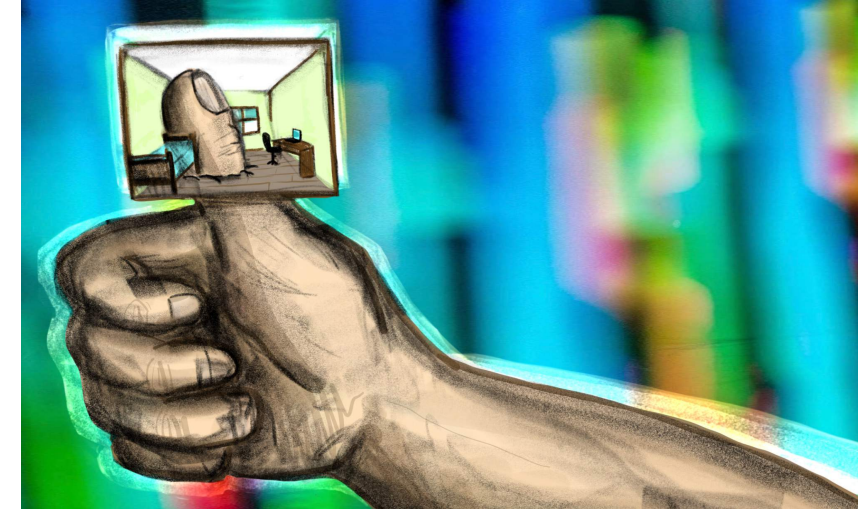
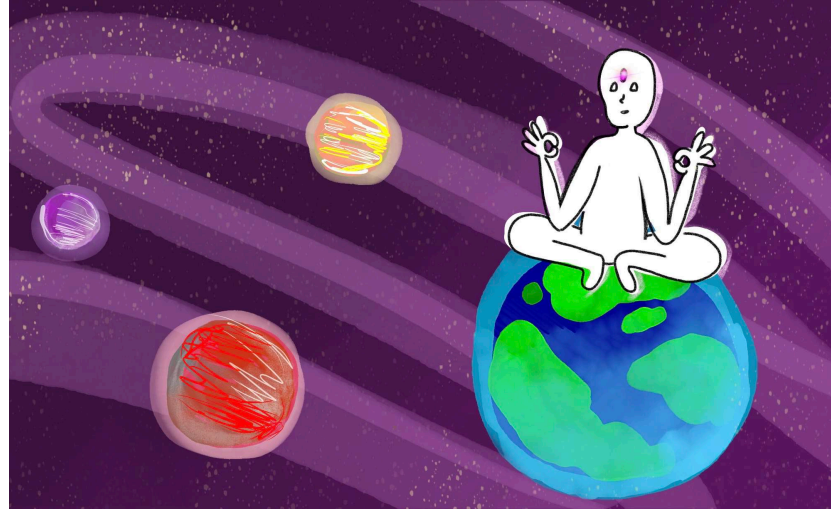
Al DiLorenzo is an artist from Columbus, Ohio. They use a combination of traditional and digital media to explore mixed reality, UX/UI design, and social practice. Their most recent project is a series of immersive illustrations viewable in virtual reality.

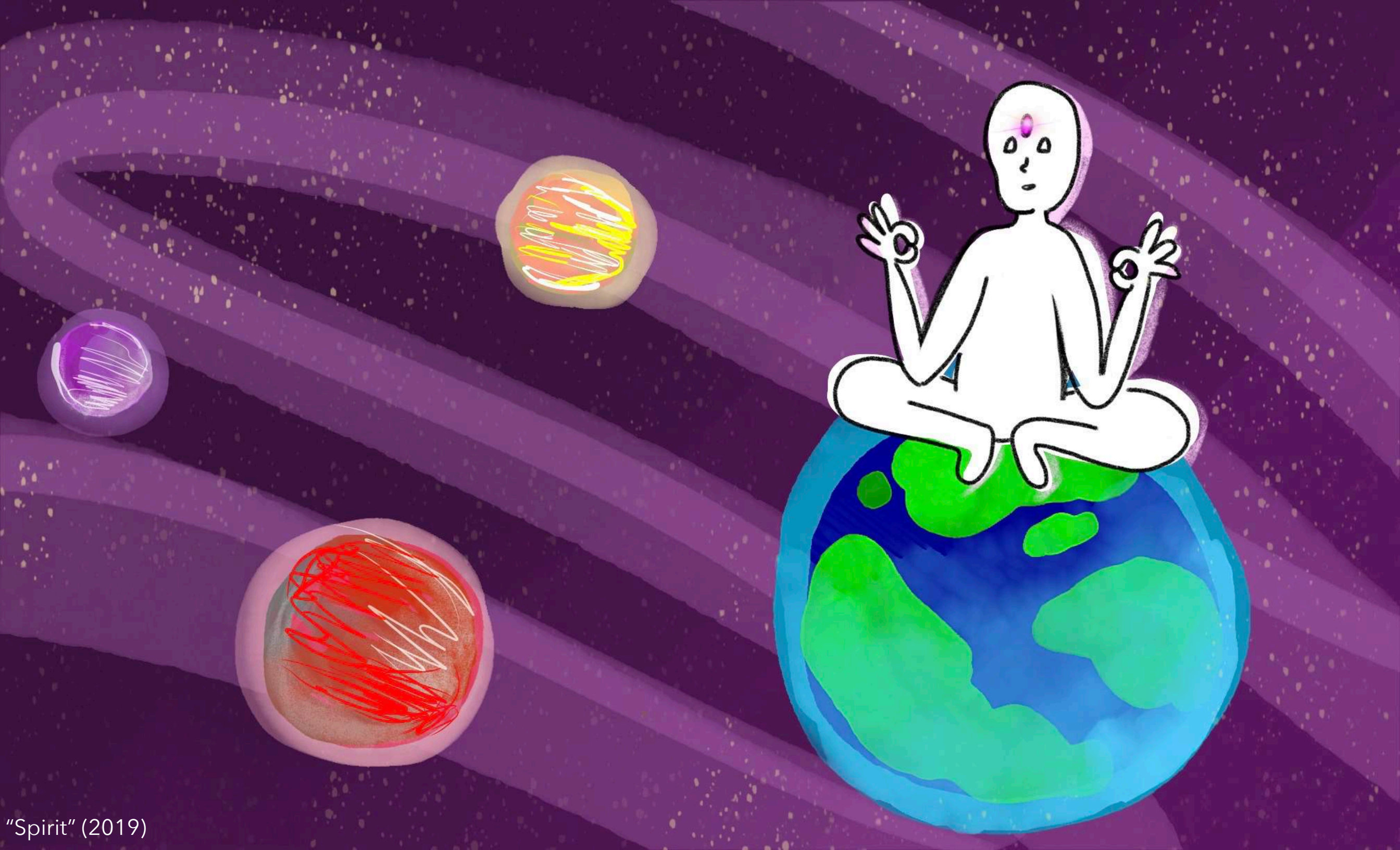
Email - aldilorenzoart@gmail.com

Website - www.aldilorenzo.art

Instagram - [@almakesart](https://www.instagram.com/almakesart)

When reflecting on what I'm grateful for, I think of all the people I love, the experiences I've had in my life, and the places that make me feel safe. In *Spirit, Love, and Room*, I try to illustrate the scale of my gratitude for things that might go unseen. The first is the creative energy that connects all of us, call it God, Source, or Spirit. This energy manifests in the form of love. Love is such a powerful thing. It transforms, illuminates, and inspires. I've been living in the mountains of Kentucky for the past six months and have learnt a lot about love from the land, its people, and its history. Our feelings are shaped by our environment and something about being surrounded by mountains makes me feel very at home. Something about being at home makes me feel at peace.

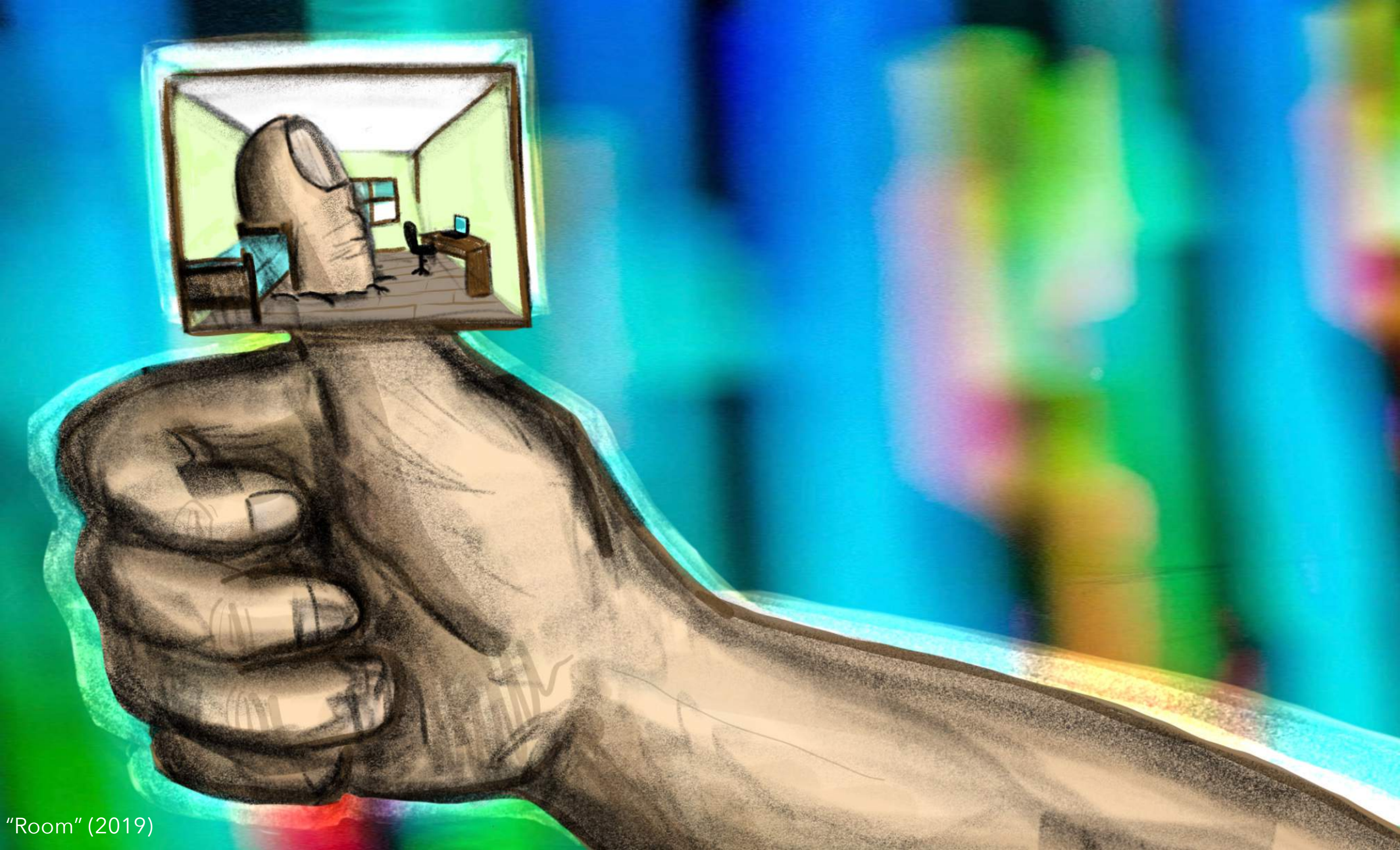




"Spirit" (2019)



"Love" (2019)



"Room" (2019)

Anne Mills

SHE/HER

Anne is a young, independent woman who currently lives in Columbus, Ohio. A recent college graduate, she is currently working at a women-owned financial planning firm, where she is constantly empowered by the strong women around her. Born a writer, Anne's voice has always been more powerful via written than it is spoken. As a profound thinker and listener, Anne's narrative is centered on what she sees and how she interprets it. As writing is one of the most powerful forms of self-reflection, she is hoping that her works will help her discover more about her place in this world, how her mental health is connected to her environment, and how this is all related to greater social forces at power. While everyone has an individual story, Anne hopes that her writing will relate to others and empower them to recognize their own voice.

A SIGN OF PEACE

I remember the first time I questioned my religious obligations. It was a rainy Sunday morning, and all I wanted to do was sleep through the storm. Instead, I was forced out of bed, put into dress clothes, and rushed out the door. "Why do we go to church?" I asked my father.

"Because it brings us peace," he simply replied.

As a sleepy and impatient six-year-old, I assumed one day the Catholic Church would make sense to me. It was a sort of club that I would be seamlessly initiated into as I grew older. I looked forward to waking up one morning as an adult, and feeling the call of something bigger. I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to know what all the Latin words, prayers, and hand movements meant. Most of all, I wanted to find peace.

In a sense, I sort of got what I wanted. Every Wednesday, I would go to CCD (short for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine), and I would learn everything that was required to become a full-fledged Catholic. I was taught the 10 Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and how to do the

Sign of the Cross. I had my first Communion, my first Confession, and I donned a head full of ashes every first Lenten Wednesday. I was proud of my Catholic faith, which is why it was such an easy decision to become fully confirmed into the church at the young age of fourteen.

Confirmation is essentially Catholic graduation. After seven years of Catholic instruction, you are initiated into the church as a full member. Catholics believe that your parents choose to baptize you into the church, but you choose to confirm yourself. Think about this: at fourteen, you cannot legally drive a car or vote, yet you are considered old enough to determine your spiritual path. I was blissfully unaware at the time, but this decision did not belong to me. It still belonged to my parents, my teachers, my peers, and the pressure to do what I perceived as the right thing.

While society is evolving, the Catholic Church remains the same. In 2012, I turned sixteen and was suddenly politically conscious and aware. The social climate was shifting, gay marriage was becoming legal in more states with every election, people were discussing abortion and birth control, and women were gaining more of a voice than ever before.

These changes were incredibly exciting to me, and I was suddenly understanding and identifying with the liberal point of view.

This view was not invited into the Catholic Church. In fact, the movements I supported, the church was actively advocating against. Sermons that used to be filled with language about helping others could now be considered hate speech. Priests pleaded with their church members to vote on specific matters, to pray that others rights were taken away, and that certain choices would damn you to hell.

The tipping point for me was the Church's reaction to the same sex marriage decision. Suddenly, the Church was on the defensive and every mass felt like a prosecution. We were asked to pray that God would help Americans realize the sacredness of marriage-- exclusively between a man and a woman. What seemed to me like an undeniable right and major step forward for humanity, was deemed a reason to hate. As someone who grew up a gay uncle and desensitized to homosexual relationships, I could not fathom how someone who was capable of so much love was

worthy of this attack. For the first time, the Catholic Church did not hold the same power as it did before, as I felt as though my moral compass was more accurate than theirs.

At this time, the image of the Catholic Church I had created completely began to crumble and my relationship with it only became more tumultuous. Even more so, I felt as if I did not belong in this space that was supposed to welcome me. Everyone around me was able to answer God's "supposed call" without an issue. Even worse, I had worked so diligently for the majority of my life to participate in this place, to only want to leave.

"What do these rituals even do?" I thought to myself during one mass. The words that had once inspired me, left me with a sense of nothingness. For me, the Catholic Church somehow lost its message in tradition. Without evolving or attempting to relate to its members, the prayers, rituals, and sacraments no longer had meaning. I felt as if I was blindly saying words and thinking thoughts, without knowing their true consequences. This filled me with a sense of anger, as I was not in control of my own actions. I guess this is a result of organized religion. You stay in it long enough, and you

realize your beliefs are not your own, they belong to the church.

The Catholic Church did not lead me to answers, it only led to more questions. One of the blessings of starting college was that I was able to choose how to fill my time. And when Sunday's rolled around I did not even think twice about skipping mass. For me, peace was not found in the ceremonial acts of the Catholic Church. Ultimately, it was discovered in deciding my own spirituality, helping others, and spreading the message of love and kindness. Leaving the Catholic Church allowed me to cut my puppet strings, and to learn so many truths about myself and the world around me.

Heather Johnson

SHE/HER

20-something queer-do.

Born and raised West Coast (US) kid raising hell in the Bible Belt.

Create.

Destroy.

Do crime.

Smoke.

Sleep.

Repeat.



Lashonda Love

SHE/HER

I am 24 years old from Columbus, OH. I have my B.A. in Music Performance from Denison University in Granville, OH. I am also the founder, head editor, and publisher of UnBound.

As a queer, pagan, woman of color, the intersections of identity and the validation of those identities in creative spaces is of incredible importance to me. UnBound is one of many projects I am working on in this capacity.

For this issue, I wanted to explore my identity as a black witch during a season remarkably co-opted and conformed to white Christian ideals despite having undeniable pagan roots. I also considered the ways in which those in positions of power and wealth benefit from the societal pressures to spend as much as we can proving our love to others during holiday seasons. I also wanted to sit in gratitude of my ancestors and my black and brown sisters wherever in the diaspora they are. My comfort area is writing, but I decided to experiment with visual art as an expression of these explorations as well.

You can find me on instagram
@madonnarihannailanashonda



"Untitled Ritual Sketch" (2019)

I am grateful for the black and brown women

before me, next to me, and after me



YULE TIDINGS, TREE TALKER

*Hoodoo
Hew dew
Who do?
Who do you think you
are you out of your God damn
you all to hell, sinners*

I walk in snowy woods
fingers brush against twisting roots
in between slick layers of ice and frozen dirt
rough tree bark scraping my palms

In winter white wiccans hear the voice of the Crone
muttering through cold darkness.
Christians praise baby Jesus
Glory be and hallelujah!
My brown knuckles rap the trunk of brown tree
Knock knock
Finds my brown ancestors whispering back to me
"who's there?"

I always thought Christmas trees were morbid
dressed in lights
and garlands
tinsel and stars
readying them for their burial
open caskets in our living rooms
their glowing branches veiled in the utter silence of decay

In dark night my fingers brush against twisting roots
Cold air whips around me
Through my hair
Snow blows dizzyingly through naked branches
Freezes my teeth
But here I catch soft voices,
like warm honey melting through the dark tree bark,
of brown shamans and healers
rootworkers and tree talkers
All foreign to this land
All calling out to me
Aśe, they say
Ashe ashe, I whisper back to brown roots

Fuck Jeff
Bezos
Merry C

Roxana Balaban

NONBINARY

I'm 28 years old living in Romania, which can sometimes feel like a whole other corner of the world. I began to experience an inner change at the age of 24. Prior to this, my life was merely an exploration, so change was inevitable. I am an introverted person and very shy. Even around others I tend to feel alone. I know that unfortunately, I'm not the only one in this world who feels this way. Besides being non-binary, I am an asexual homosexual person, which makes me see life from a different perspective. I did not identify with any LGBT+ group for a long time. That's why it hasn't been easy for me to find my "place". To be honest, I always hated labels, because everyone is actually the same, despite our social statuses, birthplaces, etc.

At the moment I work in a call center offering technical support to clients, but I still feel that I have not yet found what can totally fulfill me. I hope that one day I will be able to publish a book of poems and a biography. Most of all I wish to be truly happy with myself and to be able to offer happiness to others.

I do not have a preference in using a pronoun regarding my person. Everyone is free to use whatever pronouns they feel comfortable with.

UNTITLED

The holidays are approaching at a rapid pace.
I don't know what feelings I will find inside.
Nostalgia whispers to me that when I was just a child,
The holidays were very different and I was happy inside.

Time passes in a chaotic way, leading me in many directions,
Losing myself among the multitude of people
Who are looking for love differently.

I told myself: "Go slowly,
Don't go toward the hearts that are already in pieces."
I do not want to wear a mask
That isn't compatible with my own story.
After all, I don't think it's so bad to be different.

I hear holiday caroling, and I think of the warm embrace of
my mother,
But she is far away and I only hear her voice through my
phone.
Maybe it's time to feel content in the emotions I have,
Not with the things we give up so quickly.

I always hear the motto: "For the holidays, be kind!"
And I wonder if we really need a particular holiday
To show the human side that we often hide under criticism
and wickedness.
It's always better not to judge what you cannot
understand.

Don't only be good toward others, be good toward
yourself too.
Because you can only offer to others what you have inside
you.
Be in continuous competition with yourself,
And do not forget to be an example to those around you.
Don't let life pass you until you can't leave anything good
behind.

Be the positive emotion, a hug, a good word for someone
who needs it most.
Be two gentle eyes that look without judging,
Be a pleasant memory for another.
Be a medicine that can heal wounds.
Be an "I love you" spoken with all your heart
Without any special occasion.

Be who you really are without fear.
Happy holidays, but always be happy,
Not just for this season, for it will pass quickly.

FROM THE BEGINNING

Today I want to celebrate
All my bad old days
When I felt like
I was knocked down,
Touching the ground.
Feeling too empty inside.

Nobody was there,
But somehow,
I managed to survive.
Now I know,
I got a little stronger.

My favorite color is my darkness.
My words do not always want to run
In the same direction with someone.
often, silence if the best response I received
When something went wrong
And no one wanted to fix the problem.

After all, if you repair something
There is a possibility that
It will no longer yield as before.
Maybe I lost an important part of myself,
Trusting people again is not so easy.
I am victorious
Even if the fight is not over,
I am still breathing.
As long as we are alive
We can take it from the beginning,
Making mistakes, succeeding,
Loving more intensely.

UNTITLED

I am not a photocopy of anyone. That was never my intention. I created my own personality. I am nonbinary and I love it. No, I am *not* half woman, or half man. I just have a mix of sensations that tell me I am alive. I prefer to live in harmony with my body, which is why I will be nonbinary forever.

Nabeela Mahboob

SHE/HER

I am a Canada based mother and illustrator. I primarily use gouache and I love to work with multiple patterns in the same painting. I am inspired by nature and almost all my painting have an impression of it.

"The Beauty Bestowed Upon Us" (2019) below



"Grateful for Mother Earth" (2019)



Alex Almeida

ONCE UPON A CHRISTMAS

Many generations ago
Santa's Elves went on strike
Their pay, what pay
Forced to live
Santa's Under the Pole
Basement Housing
No benefits
Except
candy canes,
non-spiked eggnog
A limited amount
of Reindeer rides ...
Seasonal ...
20% off!
A subterranean
workspace
where the joy of the holiday season

rested in
imaginations
of past management
Vacation ...
coffee breaks
spreeeeeeaaad
over each year
Where was Santa?
Well ...
She was a merciless slave driver
who used
extended work hours,
and constant emotional
bombardment of
"it's for the children!"
Causing Elves to
neglect their own
families
for the welfare of
the rest of the world
Child labor laws?
Not at NP

Yet
Santa didn't notice
differences in Elf ear sizes
(a standard age measurement)
"There's a business to run"
"Santa has to make tough choices"
"cut costs"
"limit expenses"
Making toys and accessories
for millions of
people who made the list
This requires a shrewd mind
and a calculating attitude
Unbeknownst to Santa
the other
Mrs. Claus
being neglected in the family house
found solace in an Elf
Cinnamon
The jingle bell straps
no longer jangled

Even the Reindeer
(you know who they are)
slept in hay
Pre ...ICE AGE!
They pawprayed
For a HSUS rescue team
that never came
So...
the Elves went on strike
Santa was pissed
She decided to bring in
scab Elves
who were not satisfied
with candy canes
They started to sneak
rum into the nog
They lacked skills
They lacked workmanship
that Santa relied on
The toys took the brunt
of the half-assed attempts

to produce quality work
Toys from "Nightmare before Christmas"
Stumbling around the Yuletide tree
would be a more welcome sight
to any unsuspecting family
Except in Halloweentown
The Reindeer
who in years past
Santa bellowed
"Most trusted colleagues!"
abandoned the lead-painted
stables
They joined the Elves
for better wages,
better living conditions,
and against
a tyrannical, self-absorbed employer,
an absentee landlord,
Santa H. Claus
the other
Mrs. Claus felt content
to move to a local igloo

with an Elf named
Tarragon,
or something spicy
Santa handled it
well ...
"They are jealous of My wealth,
My toy company,
that millions of people
adore me,
the poundage I gain
in one gift-giving night
of cookies,
cheese,
milk,
etc.
Who would not want to be Meee?
They just don't understand
what it takes to be Santa,
a Global Icon."
And she thought about her greatness,
And she thought about her specialness,
And after a week

and more than a half
Caraf binge
with St. Patrick
and the Easter Bunnies
Santa had an epiphany
Some say,
"Those three were doing a bit more
than just drinking"
Some think she was touched
by a Supreme Being
Our crew believes she was touched
by a spirit ...
A spirit of giving
Santa,
like Dorian Gray
got caught up in her
shadow
Believing Christmas
to be
all about her
But ...
not since

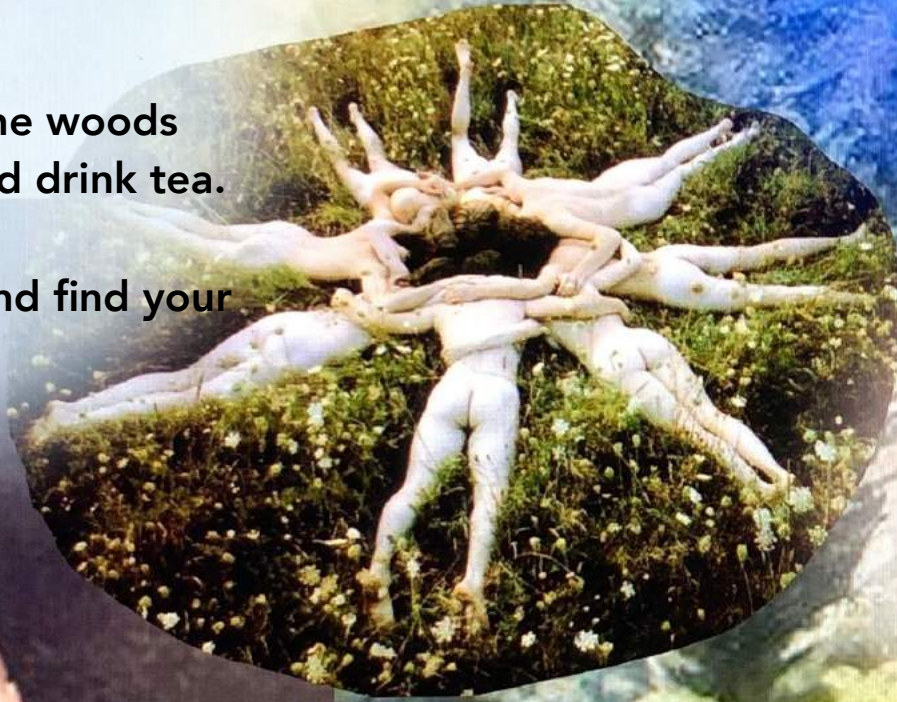
When Santa approached the law offices
of Thyme, Mint and the Italian,
Seasoning
the Elves, the Reindeer, and
the other Mrs.Claus
(her most recent lover,
Cinnamon
eloped with Curry,
the Powter twin)
were outside
Waiting
And they knew by Santa's walk,
and her gaze
that while Christmas is eternal
Santa had been saved

Ayana Crow

THEY/THEM

I live in a house in the woods
where I make art and drink tea.

Turn off the lights and find your
way home.



P.B. Collins

SHE/HER

I like to refer to myself as a professional storyteller, recreational gore researcher and giggles enthusiast.

Truthfully I'm a young filmmaker trying my hand at various mediums, from writing to performance, and doing it with various levels of success.

SATAN, PARDON ME... SANTA

I must confess, a very odd thing brings me joy. I love giving presents. Putting thought into someone's gift, making it special, meaningful and just for them... It has to be clever and fun, something they hadn't even thought of themselves until they opened the box and realized it was exactly what they wanted.

But cruel fate can never just give me something, it always has to be wrapped in a shiny paper of unpleasantness.

I hate shopping for things. The incessant ads, the packed aisles and it's always so hot and loud in shops, it's like satan's foyer.

I hate rude salespeople just as much as I hate overenthusiastic ones. I loathe teenagers with fake smiles coming up to me and asking if I need help, shove off! I'm here to buy a book, not make a friend. I hate how stores are built, how they make you walk around and around to get to things you actually want. Most of all I hate how they make me feel.

I've never seen any reason to divide men's and women's clothes on different floors, other than to make me feel awkward when I want to buy something from the men's department. This obsessive need to define what is appropriate for men and for women makes me sick and it makes me feel shame. If I want to buy a men's shirt who are you to stop me? If my friend wants to buy himself a skirt, he doesn't need your judgemental looks as if it will stop him. Who are you to put these stupid stairs between us?

Whenever I join mother to shop for the kids in our family, I can't help but be annoyed. I would always describe my mother as a progressive woman, for someone raised in a rural village in the 70's, she is incredibly strong, confident and independent. She is very pro LGBTQ+, she's open and kind to anyone and she managed to raise three daughters in that spirit. She and my father made sure we always knew, that no matter what anyone ever said, we were capable of anything. But still, she has it in her head, these things are for boys and these are for girls. Whenever I question these convictions, she scoffs and shakes her head, and talks about how I'm fixating on silly things. And yes, maybe I am.

I think we can all agree that of all the pressing gender issues plaguing this world, the gender-based separation of toys is

a low stakes issue. Or it seems so. In reality, it's programming. It tells young boys that trucks and tools are theirs and it tells young girls that stoves and vacuum cleaners are for them. It says boys can't be interested in fashion and it tells girls they need to love babies. It locks them in these stereotypes at such an early age that not only is it difficult to step out of them, it makes them feel like it's wrong.

The same way we all feel we HAVE to buy presents. In a certain sense, it's nice, it's a sort of obligation of reciprocity on the surface, but deep down it gives us a sense of gratitude. Someone did something nice for me, so I need to do something nice for them. Someone buys me a present, I'm going to buy them a present. But why do I have to buy them something? Isn't it just as nice if I make them dinner or write them a song? Isn't that even better and more personal? Well... no, not according to the commercials.

Just like children are programmed into the binary separation of genders, we are all programmed to believe that a present is only worth something if it cost a lot of money. Hell, that's the primary definition of worth anyway; monetary worth. We associate love with money and if someone spends a lot on a gift, it means they must really care about us. Yes, yes we all

say we don't care about the cost and it's the thought that counts and dead pets live on a farm in the clouds. Alas... we lie. Because deep down we all know dads enjoy Rolexes more than ties, I would rather get concert tickets than a tree planted in my name and there's a reason the grass grows really fast on one patch in the backyard.

It's not our fault. Since birth we are bombarded by books, films, tv shows and every other form of media, telling us - the more expensive the present, the better it is. That's why diamonds are a girl's best friend, not handmade bracelets. And we buy into it, why wouldn't we, it's everywhere we look and if it's that ubiquitous it must be true.

It's not our fault, but it is our responsibility. We can look past the mound of garbage ads and wade through the river of bullshit to get to the other side, where we really don't care about how much a gift costs. Where worth has to do with time and thought you put into it, not bills.

So let me end this dour essay on consumerism, which may as well be called "All the things that annoy me around Christmas", on a somewhat positive note.

I love giving presents, but I hate shopping so I've come up with an ingenious solution. I won't shop. Brilliant, right?

It's going to be a lot of work, it's probably going to suck and I'm going to hate myself for doing it. Yes, it would be a lot easier to just cash out and be done with Christmas shopping in an afternoon, but it's the principle of the thing. Because that's the point of Christmas isn't it? Putting yourself through hell to make someone else happy.

Even if it isn't... it's going to be the point of mine.

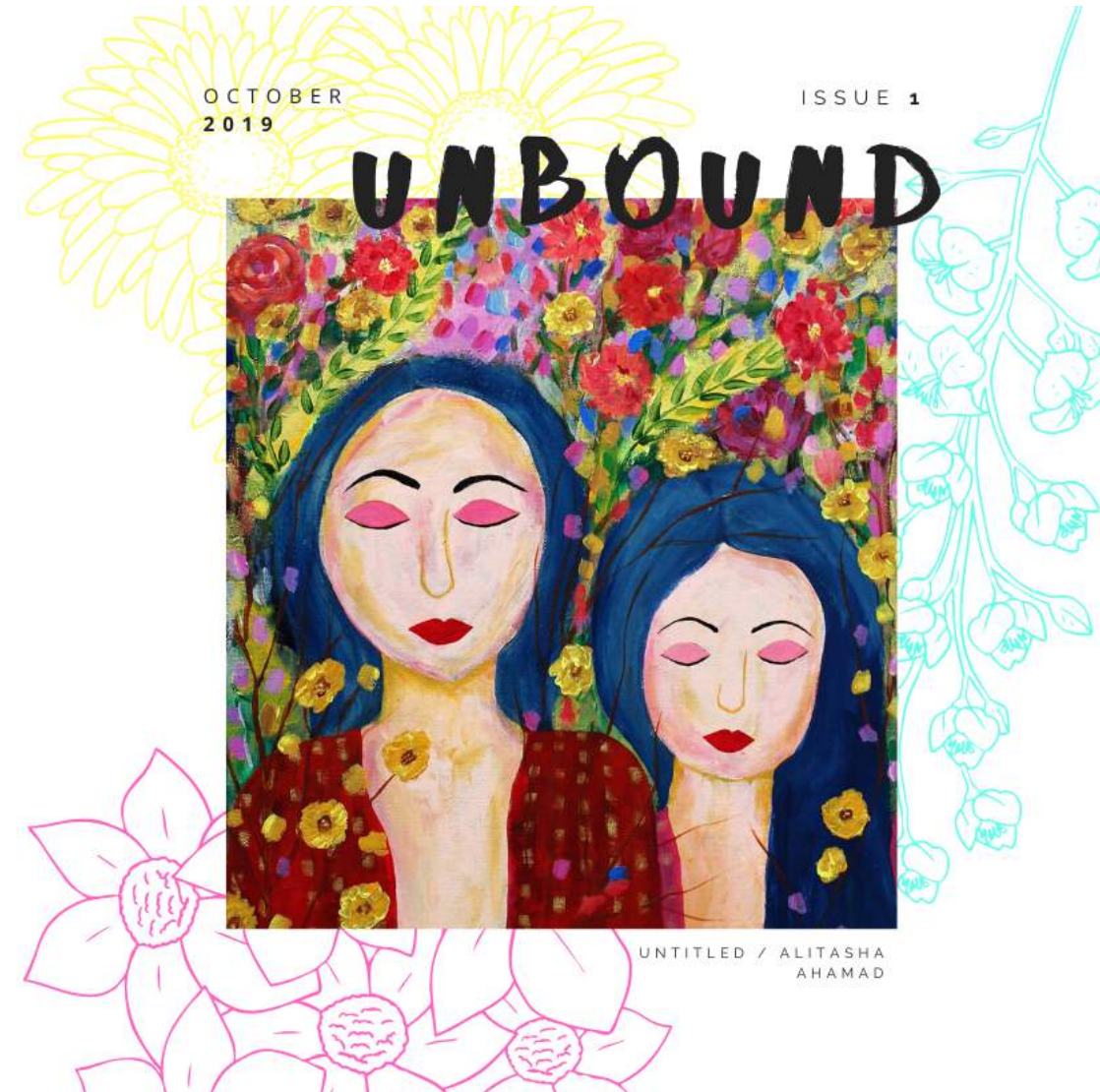
UnBound Thanks

The UnBound Team

Lashonda Love - Head Editor, Curator, Publisher
Anne Mills - Editor

UnBound Collaborators

Al DiLorenzo	Lashonda Love
Alex Almeida	Nabeela Mahboob
Anne Mills	P.B. Collins
Ayana Crow	Rebecca Kittle
Heather Johnson	Roxana Balaban



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