

A few months ago, I found myself overwhelmed by unexpected loss. Unable to put my grief aside and focus on art, my creativity dried up. Not until I discovered the importance of creativity as a tool for overcoming grief was I able to look at my problems in a different light. I regained the ability to articulate my feelings and foster personal growth through the process of making art. Creativity allowed me to take whatever emotions were overwhelming me and give them shape and structure. After a lot of poetry-writing, I created my final sculpture inspired by the relationship between creativity and grief.

Although creating this sculpture was tedious, the happy accidents I made along the way allowed me to be much more flexible. During the casting process, the exterior shell buckled in. However, when it was uncovered, I was awed by the resulting organic bubbles lacing around the cast of my forearm. Though flawed, this collapse made the cast far more intricate. The process of painting each broken piece required two to six hours of delicate brushwork. Once finished, I added gold accents that took at least four layers to obtain full opacity. The last step was to reassemble the arm by gluing all the pieces back together.

Primarily influenced by Kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken ceramic with gold lacquer, this painted sculpture shows the growth and beauty that comes out of heartbreak. It's easy to give up on something broken without ever seeing the beauty of it fixed. However, the imperfections and breakages of this sculpture are what make it unique. Instead of seeing the broken pieces as a mistake, I could give each a new life. Through this sculpture, I was able to teach myself that no heartbreaks are fully damaging. All grief comes with love and creativity. I just needed to let them in.

Colby C.
California

Rapture/Rupture

Colby C.



Creative Constipation

I came back
to three fourths of this
and spent the rest of the weekend constructing the last fourth-
A final grasp onto something that might unify
The quotes and the notes and the errors.
The magnet that could pull the needle out of the haystack
and align the limbs
in one swift pop
to become a perfect skeleton:
An outline with evidence, analysis and poise.
However, it just
Added more weight.

Even the surgical sharpness of double spaced Times New Roman size 12
couldn't straighten the spine
of the gelatin monster
in MLA 8th Chicago Turabian APA Biotech.
Looking at the screen,
My eyes glaze over
back to 8th grade's high school
to sophomore years' college
to the new ways out of the next ways in.

This is what creative withdrawal looks like.
with whelms on top of whelms until
I'm so overwhelmed
I haven't picked up a paintbrush in almost a month.
I haven't created anything.
Those 20 pages of notes compressed into a size 4 single spaced brick
was what I was trying to swallow
and later digest into a double spaced ticket to academic closure.
Forming a wall deep into my psyche.
Art is healing,
and in the time I needed it most
I left it untouched.

Family Ghost

In family dinners
she'd walk in,
sit down,
and I could feel the weight of her.

Rocks on my chest,
tendons pulling me down,
sadness manifested into something physical.
It's what people feel
when they say
a ghost walked through them.

I preferred to ignore the ghost.
I spent dinners
behind doors,
working on the next distraction.
I grew far away,
and took my shadow with me.
I spent my time in between,
using children's tools
to build me a new makeshift world.
A counterforce
against the gravitational pull
my sister left for me.

She promised she would go to college,
so we let her go.
We let the sweet smell of promise
Lead us into a new life.
She took the plane
while I took the drive,
each on our way
to our own respective universes.
I vanished quickly into mine,
letting the currents of art and
newness wash me away.

Elbow and Ankle

I met them half a year ago,
friends of a friend.
A boy and a girl,
Elbow and Ankle.

I spent my spring with Ankle.
She was minimalist,
delicate and smart.
I helped her through her sadness,
stopped my bike when I heard hers fall.
I listened for her,
waiting to fill

the empty spaces inside of her.
She had a weight too.
Not quite like my sister's,
but maybe something I could learn
how to carry.

She told me to go love Elbow,
so during the summer,
I spent time with them both.
We decluttered the ugliness
inside of ourselves.
They made me feel wanted again,
like something new.
I spent my free time
thinking of Elbow,
the softness of him.
At first glance
he was made of hard lines
and matter of facts.
But underneath
he had a gentleness.
He handled life
as though it might explode.
A boy made from clenched fists,
I wanted to show him the beauty of letting go.
She told me that he could be loved.

The Fall

It was a Sunday in mid October
when everything came crashing down.
A spider web
mistakenly caught,
then rubbed on dusty jeans.
I watched promises vanish like smoke in a cloudy sky.
I dreamed a dusty dream.

Fragile Waters

It was morning when I got a phone call from Ankle.
Looking at the river,
Phone pressed to cheek,
She told me that she slept with elbow.
I steadied my breathing,
steady like the morning fog that blurred the horizon,
like the river.

My dad drove up,
so we drove to a silent brunch.
Across the table,
he told me that my sister
dropped out of college,
and was back in rehab.
This time, there were no phones,
no way I could call her.
sensing the approaching static in my heart,
I thought back to the river, something calm.
The smooth water,
wrinkles and curves,
Predictable movement.
Suddenly,
the water became feverish,
animation slides out of order,
fading like the spots on the back of my eyes.
My eyes widened as I realized
the reflections were ghosts.
These promises were hollow.

Clay in a Kiln

I've been making room
for a love shaped space;
a vacant spot for someone dear to squeeze in.
I still needed more measurements,
to choose the curtains, the furniture.
I would need to wear it out too.
However, the furniture was never used.
The kitchen remained untouched.
Some sort of unnatural disaster
swallowed it up.
It would have been better to leave it abandoned,
or even watch it decay
instead of watching the collapse.
Never even used
before becoming useless.
Now this empty space has become something like a
dead limb.
My heart has to carry this emptiness,
turned ugly too quickly.
Bending inwards,

buckling over,
My little pocket
exploded like clay in a kiln,
sending fractals deep
into soft tissue.
The emptiness that used to be novelty
enveloped my entire body.
Sinks turning into sinkholes.
I should have never wanted someone
at all.

Fatal Hit

I promised myself
this time it would be different,
but the bodies of hollow dreams
Clung onto me
like a wet T shirt.
Their heaviness
dragged me to the bottom
of the ocean.
My wings won't work now.

Ellipse Posse

Every day was another dot in a long line of ellipses.
I was waiting for one to end
and snap the others back in place.

Growing Up by the Bootstraps

Time allowed me to take a deep breath.
Sharpness turned into soreness.
I wanted to forgive,
So I took my phone
and made the call.
I told Ankle about my pain,
opening myself up to show her
the healing wounds.
I put my anger and hurt aside
just to make sure she was facing upwards,
and then left for good.

I waited for my star sixty seven sister.

I called Elbow, told him how I felt.
I spilled the most protected parts of me
on the pavement.
“I’m sorry.”
With flushed cheeks and fidgety fingers,
I let myself free.

Letting Go

Last night I became transparent.
You could pass through my soul and have nothing to grab;
It had already become light.
I felt the sun on my belly,
felt my inner static disappear.

Finding Lost Keys

What is the relationship between creativity and grief?
Is it a snake biting its tail?
A game of marco polo?
Some artists say
they need the acidity of grief.
They need its sharpness
to dig into themselves
and snag onto something spotted.
I decided to run from mine,
to focus on the jolt of my kneecaps,
my feet hitting the ground.
Everyday
I woke up a different person,
shapeshifting,
hiding from the roll call
of yesterday’s heaviness.
With each disguise
I lost another part of myself.
The only way to relieve pressure
is to let it out.

It’s time to pick up all the things
I threw down in anger
and hold them close.
They are still young.
I left my creativity
on the side of the road,
Wrapped up in cellophane and rubber bands.
Now I’m coming back.

To my sister:
I love you.
I should have never tried to swallow
that weight on your shoulders.
No matter how much I take,
only you can take it off.
When you come back,
I have a seat
saved for you.

Come home.