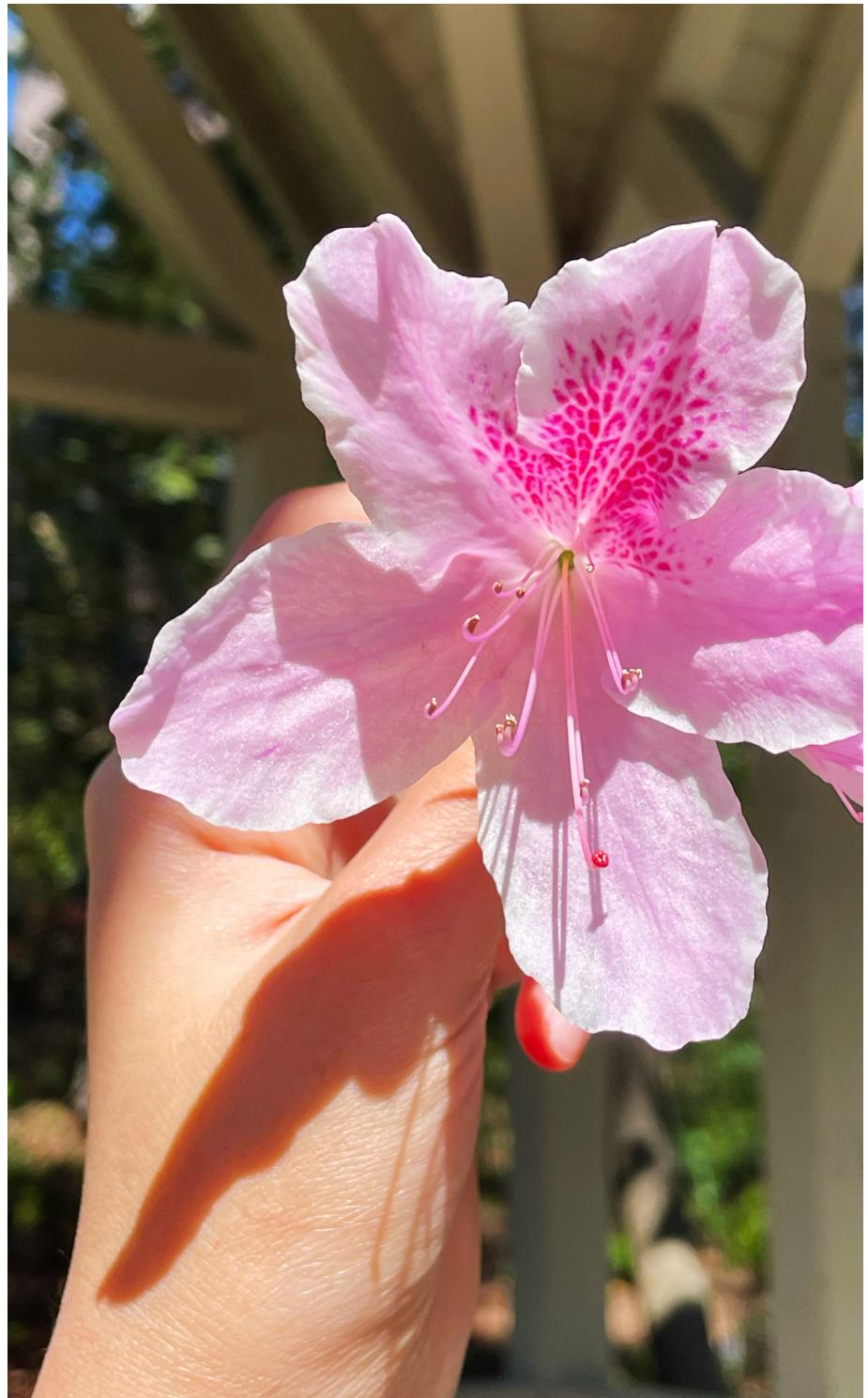




CORPUS





## ars poetica

shuck your skin off  
with a sharp jerk  
and a squeak  
pieces of flesh  
line up tidily  
fresh and green

your body is a cold ear  
plunging into a rolling  
boil, listening to the  
song of the shut lid clink

tenderness is a reduction  
of time and temperature,  
an open-mouthed invitation  
to bite down firmly

into you, bead by bead,  
until you are gnawed clean  
to the cob, nothing left behind but  
teeth



## delineation

the full belly of the sun, warm against your scalp  
sifts through strands of hair escaping at the nape  
of your neck  
carves fabric into stiff folds of shadow  
renders the chin a chiaroscuro sphere  
catches you mid-smile  
at a slant  
half-obsured  
by the back of your head  
one eye a mystery left to be solved  
by the conspiratorial gaze, the collar curving up to meet the skin  
power line wire echoing the swoop from shoulder to ear,  
thumb to thumb  
hard joint pivot held open  
one chipped finger draws a clean split down the middle  
traces over and over the crater of a scar  
your forehead a door closing on empty space





# all beautiful things are purple

fingernails frozen in the autumn air.

lavender syrup in your morning latte.

your hands wrapped around the mug,  
the privilege to provide you with warmth.

couch cushions scattered on the floor.

my face across from yours.

your hands wrapped around my throat,  
the courage to look back.

lilacs and the vitality of young love

stained in the wood.

the scratch of match meeting striker,  
the inescapable smell of regret.

pomegranate, punctured and sprayed.

raw desperation, flowering from my core.

voices drifting through the haze,  
the filthy scar of remembrance.

honesty is flammable.

survival is a beautiful and ugly thing.

your teeth engraved into my skin,  
the tissue chewed clean off my bones.

savoring your flesh in my mouth,

soothing the incurable itch in my throat.

*fused together, intertwined*

heart spilling out of body

\ \ vertebrae misaligned //

forehead fiery against the marble countertops

how to keep it all (from breaking away)?

how to let it all (dissolve with grace)?

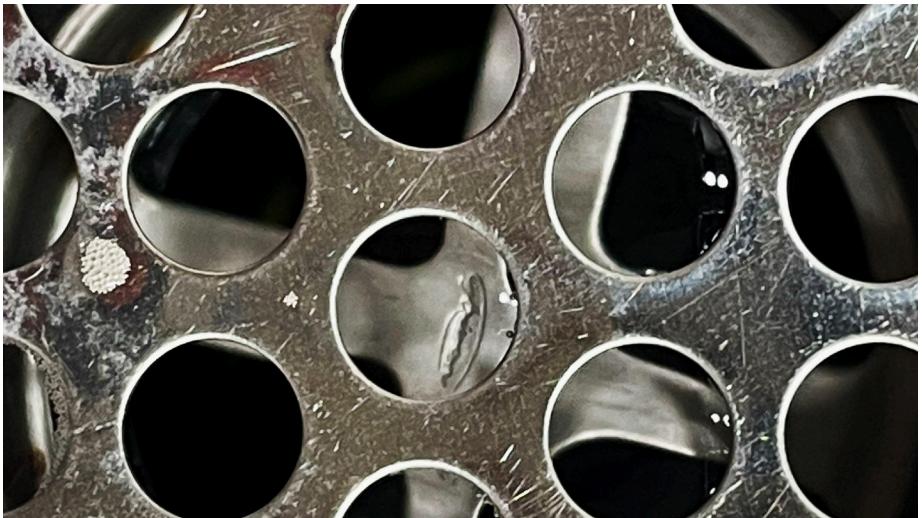




## outline

the blood  
on my thighs  
spells relief.  
i clench my eyes  
shut, pin together  
the folds of your  
face in my mind.  
what a shame  
it is to love  
someone unnamed,  
removed from the  
language of loss.  
there are many ways  
to imitate the appearance of  
human flesh, but none  
real enough  
to replace  
the unborn

weight inside me, the warmth of breath against the crook  
of my neck. regret is the clock's steel spring straining,  
and fear is the jaw advancing the ticking gear's teeth.  
everything  
is cold  
metal  
where it  
doesn't  
belong.





## lattice

i remember pressing your chest  
to my ear  
like a conch shell, waiting  
for your heartbeat to wash over me.  
i hold the memory, warm water between  
my f \ i | n | g | e / r s,  
and watch as it drips  
away.

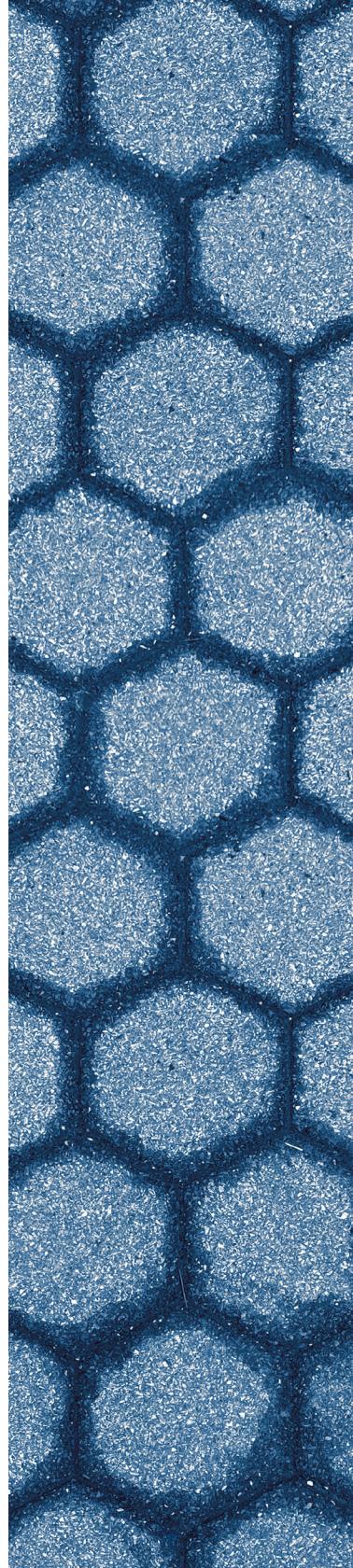
i used to believe in the semblance of control,  
the abstraction of hard lines  
and  
divisions  
into suggestions?of?separation,  
or at least the choice of what?to?keep with me  
and what?to?scoop clean out of my core.

but the ocean always rushes  
to meet the shoreline, even when  
the sand bites back.

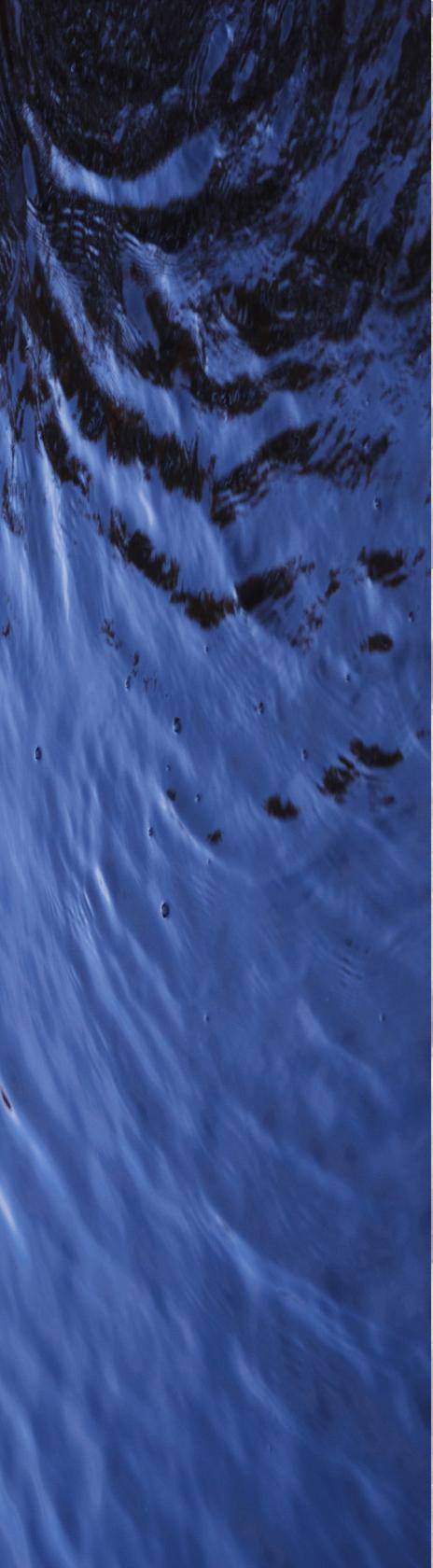
i line the site of excavation  
with sheer cloth, pretend  
reduction doesn't hold  
its own shape.  
negative space  
carves into the  
outlines of the  
living.

outside my window, the city, shredded,  
blinks back at me, slices of blinds  
cutting through trees and buildings.

even the unthinking leaf  
appears to have direction  
when whipped about  
by the wind.







## subhuman

i. i fall from the sky in a whisper of gentle touch.

you prayed for this in december -  
for a sheet of white to purify you,  
for the numbing winds to deliver you  
an escape from this plodding monotony.

can sentience precede the breath of existence?  
how much of a body must stand to be considered a body?

ii. i was born from dull ache and childlike glee,  
malleable enough to simulate softness  
but too dangerous to hold close.

you pick out pebbles for my eyes,  
tear apart branches for my arms,  
drape your scarf around  
my lopsided shoulders.

even if they are the same ones  
that freeze just to teach me love,  
will i ever understand the hands  
that pound me into shape?

iii. when tomorrow comes, the sun  
will sweep a grand farewell  
across the sky, and i will  
stream away wordlessly.

even after i melt back into the ground,  
i will remember your firm palms  
on my face, and your radiant smile,  
mirroring the arc of mine.

## Life Support



I can't see the moon clearly at all unless I hold my breath and squint really hard. First it's enveloped by a glowing halo, then by luminous rays shooting out from it, before I can finally make out the grey spots on its surface.

Even when I try to see it, there's always a light so fiery around it that it looks like blue flame marking its blazing trajectory through the sky. Each time I blink, it shifts position, and multiple faded, overlapping versions of it appear encircling its perimeter, like someone went into Photoshop and made countless low-opacity copies of the original layer before scattering them arbitrarily.

My doctor says I probably have astigmatism.

The night at the pier when you left me, I studied the blurry shadows shifting across your face as I told you that it felt like everything had condensed into a singularity. Like a star had combusted in an all-consuming supernova, and there was nothing I could do but marvel at the beauty of it collapsing in on itself. The whipping wind and waves flooded into the silence between us.

A few suspended seconds floated by before you said, "All beautiful things are purple." I remember the tenderness with which you said it, and the soft smile on your face when you followed it up with, "You should write about that." I turned away. You were too painfully bright to stare at head-on.

A week later, I did actually end up writing about an impressive assortment of beautiful purple things. In a drunken frenzy, I scrawled out line after line on the nearest napkin I could find.

"Plum-stained fingers, pressed against my tongue."

"Pomegranate, punctured and sprayed."

"The perfect circle of your teeth engraved in my skin."

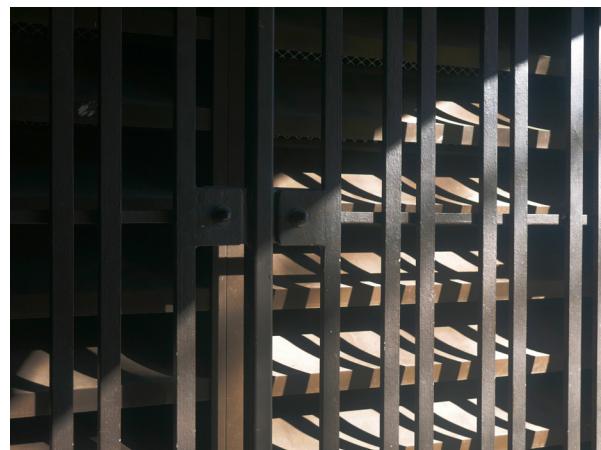
The list went on. I sent it all to you, along with a picture of me leaning over the bathroom sink, the flush from the alcohol so visible it was crawling down my stomach and peeking out from under my top.

Back when you first suggested I write about it, I let out a half-hearted laugh, too detached from the world to even think about poetry. The wind blew straight through me, freezing me to the core with its indiscriminate force. We were sitting near each other in the most unbelievably creaky chairs, rooted to the table at a distance that was just far enough that we had to lean in to hear each other. It was as if the shadows beneath us were swallowing our words whole.

My eyes traced the distant ripples on the water's surface as I felt everything around me fall flat as a sheet of paper, then bounce back so vigorously that it catapulted me into the stars. I fractured into countless cubic compartments, none of which belonged together or to me. The ground grew legs and scurried away, and I lost grasp of everything, soaring high above all the wreckage. Then I wondered to myself: how can an act of mercy hurt so much? Why must liberation be so violent?

But I can't allow myself to ruminate on these questions any longer. Above us, the moon returns night after night, and I must learn to see its pitted surface in isolation from the brilliant radiance obscuring it.

I must hold the world steadily within my gaze even when it threatens to blind me.



## Afterword

I first thought of the title “Corpus” a couple months back while looking through some of my old poems. A quick Google search confirmed that the word could refer to both “a collection of written texts” and “the main body or mass of a structure.” Given that I often gravitate towards bodily imagery in my work, it felt like the perfect fit for a portfolio of my poems and photos.

I have always thought that the raw feeling I want to evoke in my work is best communicated through a careful combination of the tender and gruesome. Whether I am probing past pain points or working through ongoing issues, my writing is almost always confessional in nature. I reflect on the people I care for and agonize over and the experiences that define and shape me. My work is often about loss, but it is just as much about letting go and finding a way for love, grief, and growth to coexist.

As an artist, I derive great joy from combining different creative media. Since childhood, drawing has been one of the most important parts of my life, and poetry quickly assumed a similar position once I started writing in middle school. A few years ago, I began leaning more into multimedia and textile art once I learned how to crochet and embroider. However, it wasn’t until I created “human nature”—an amalgamation of painting, sewing, sculpture, embroidery, crochet, found objects, and writing—that all the pieces fully clicked into place. For the first time, it felt like I had successfully combined *all* my creative interests into one piece, where the individual elements bled into and complemented each other seamlessly.



“human nature”

Picking up photography for the past few months has given me a fascinating new means of expression, although I am still working towards a cohesive identity in my images. I am interested in shadows and reflections as intangible extensions or representations of tangible objects. I like the idea that I am using the camera, which interacts with light to create images, to capture different forms of light, or the lack thereof. This collection also focuses on geometry—which comes through most noticeably in “outline”, “lattice”, and their accompanying images—and nature and seasonality, as is apparent in both the content and sequencing of the photos.

“Corpus” is inspired by *sashiko*, a type of traditional

Japanese stitching used for visible mending that incorporates repeated geometric elements drawn from nature. I love the relationship this work establishes of art as a form of visibly mending oneself and openly working through difficult experiences. *Sashiko* is often described as a simultaneously functional and beautiful craft, and the inherent desire to appreciate the fabric, which is something small we often take for granted, informs the closely cropped, magnified approach I adopt with many of my photos. An interesting characteristic of *sashiko* is that it traditionally doesn’t use knots to lock threads in place; instead, it uses overlay stitches called *kasane* for a smooth interaction between the thread and fabric, similar to how a sewing machine uses backstitching to reinforce the beginning and end of a seam. This quality of continuity lends itself to the flutter book structure implemented in the physical format of this portfolio, which allows for an uninterrupted viewing experience that flows from one page to the next.



Perhaps the most apparent effect of visible mending within the portfolio is with the images facing “all beautiful things are purple”. The photos are arranged in a composite patchwork consisting of two columns of triptychs, and the motifs of division and flame or smoke tie the images together. The segmented structure of the photos also relates to the skeletal shape of the poem, which outlines a ribcage and the vertebra of a spinal cord.

Beyond the central ideas of sashiko, a close consideration of temporality and connectivity forms the backbone of “Corpus.” At the broadest level, there is the concept of seasonality in the sequencing of the images and the tones of the corresponding poems. The collection begins with the light, playful descriptions of “ars poetica” and “delineation” before plummeting into the searing, visceral imagery of “all beautiful things are purple” and “outline”. It then recedes into a more removed and reflective style in “lattice” and “subhuman” and concludes with “Life Support”, which is full of loss but culminates with a feeling of firm resolve. This piece, which also crosses the threshold from poetry to prose, is paired with photos of fresh greenery reminiscent of the beginning of the portfolio, signifying a sense of renewal and continuation.

However, there are also several instances where the juxtaposition of multiple images or components of an image allows viewers to see the same subject in a different light, perspective, or moment in time, such as the two benches in the photo following “ars poetica” or the pair of portraits alongside “delineation”. These images sensitize viewers to slight

adjustments in timing or framing and invite them to interpret similar subjects in different ways.

Sequencing also involved experimenting with pairing poems and images such that the connection between them wasn’t immediately apparent. I felt that the pairing of “outline” with its accompanying photos was particularly effective in that they aren’t obviously related, but there is the shared idea of “gaps” in the perforated metal surface and between the slabs of the chairs. The positioning of the images also echoes the circle and cross shapes created by the poem on the facing page, and the repeating geometric elements are closely mirrored on the next page with “lattice,” which employs the same visual motif in a vastly different context. This decision, which is solidified by factors like the callback to “all beautiful things are purple” in “Life Support”, reinforces the connective tissue tying together the whole portfolio.

“Corpus” is a body stitched together of language and images, light and shadow, and presence and absence. Thank you for spending time with this collection and letting it breathe, transform, and settle with you.