





Volume 9, 2021 Issue 3

California Coastal Commission K-12 Poetry Contest

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ISSN: 2169-3013

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Design Statement

The annual, distinctive print issue of *Tab*: *The Journal of Poetry & Poetics* engages the reader with poetry as a material object and asks that the reader negotiate between image and text. The design does not assume a traditional role of quietly framing content; instead, design actively shapes the reading experience and continues to experiment and explore the intersections between form and content, object and space, and reader and reading.

Beginning last year, the 2020 print issue was the first issue that was driven by inclusive design and low-vision principles. We commit to producing an engaging and increasingly equitable experience for all abilities. We developed a new website for online issues that also makes available accessible issue archives, including audio recordings of poems. Visit our website at <u>TabJournal.org</u>.

The 2021 print issue was created during a time of quarantine as the world underwent the isolation and anxieties of the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, we reflected on concepts of time—as a sense of place, as space, as structure, as visual experience of light and dark. Time has an impact on psychology; we can lose time or lose track of time. Time has a history of visual representation and documentation as well. This year's print issue explores visual expressions of time warping, time traveling, and the chronology and the kaleidescope of time keeping. The images and texts engage in ideas of process over time, such as healing or growth.

While the design for online issues draws from the year's print issue, the issues that follow in March, May, July, September, and November are designed

and formatted for the on-screen reading experience. Decisions about page size, typography, and composition are driven by the online reading experience, rather than to mimic a print version.

To request one or more copies of the print issue, please use the Contact form on the website.

Special Issue: California Coastal Commission Poetry Contest

Every year, Tabula Poetica selects finalists for the Coastal Poetry Contest for K-12 students hosted by the California Coastal Commission. This year, Chapman University students in *Tab Journal* Editor Anna Leahy's MFA poetry writing class served as the mid-level judges.

Tab Journal is thrilled to share the poems of young Californians as part of this collaboration with the community and Annie Frankel, the Public Education Program of the California Coastal Commission. You can also view the winning art and poetry selections at the California Coastal Commission's website: https://www.coastal.ca.gov/art-poetry/mm21/winners2021.html#poetry2021.



Me by the Sea

Where the redwoods meet the sea you'll find me. By the rocky cliffs, in the salty sea air, I'll be there. Where the tide pools are with treasures hiding, their secrets I'll be finding.

—Liberty Lawrence Kolsch

The Beach

The sun.

The surf.

The boards.

The sand.

The towels.

The castles.

The food.

The birds.

The fish.

The shark!

The Beach.

-Cruz Morell



I Cast my Bait

```
I cast my bait,
Into the ocean,
Shake my line,
Like a potion,
Is there a single fish,
In this cold ocean?
I'm going to catch the one
       that causes a commotion,
I'll pull Moby,
From this brine,
When my bobber,
Gives the sign,
I will catch the fish to beat,
Pics will pop as it flops
       at my feet,
Then of course,
I will set it free,
Because all fish,
Belong in the sea.
```

—Ender Guthrie

Deep Sea Diver

Scuba man in the deep Saw a sea lion fast asleep Pretty sure counting sheep

-Rhett Menexas

Not by Myself

I imagine I am a jellyfish all alone
I swim over to an orca
Then I see two sea turtles, other jellyfish, and sea urchins.
It makes me feel happy because when I'm in the ocean
Sometimes it's lonely and dark
But seeing all the animals reminds me
I am not alone
And I have friends

—Juliette Watson



Land, Sea, and Sky

Waves crash and roll
Up to my knees in sticky sand
Grandfather helps me up and says
Taking me by the hand

"Sometimes in life you have to make choices And not just whether to eat soup or tofu I'm talking about where you belong Where you are most like you

"Your mother is from the sky
She flew down here at birth
And as much as she loves this little planet
She wasn't meant for Earth

"Your father loves the land The land is from where he came And I can't say I understand But I love him all the same "I am from the sea
I could watch the waves all night
And when my time has come to go
To be buried there would be my delight"

When he suddenly passed away
And his sand mixed with the sea's
I remembered his last words
About who I was meant to be

"You could be from the sky, sea, land," he said
"Or anything else you choose
Just don't try to please others
Yourself is something you cannot lose"

"Grandfather, I'm from the clouds It's a little bit of each I've been to the sea and sky And of course the sandy beach

"Grandfather, that's where I'm meant to be!"

—Emily Hembruch

No Matter What

The wind blows hair on my face telling me to close my eyes and listen, listen to the beauty of the never ending roll and crash, the symbols of life beating out a steady rhythm, no matter what happens next.

-Kira Mielcarski

Low Tide

Alone in my room,
I haven't lost your wilderness.
Timeless screen time has not tamed me.
I still long for your waters
On a dry day
I still want to dive
In a shallow world.

Malibu shores
Share the tedium of my chores.

Shades give way to your sun
But your sun always shines
All the way to my bed
And I
Beached like a gray whale
Am waiting to be pushed back
Into freedom

Maybe I'll follow you Sea lion From doomed day to Dume Beach Where the low tide Reveals treasures.

-Linnea Oliver

The Sea

I feel the salty spray of the ocean,
Breathe in the fresh morning air,
Skip through the soft sand,
Leaving a necklace of footprints on the beach's chest

I stop at the water's edge,
Feel the gentle lap of cool water against my feet,
Run through the refreshing water,
Splashing droplets everywhere

Look at the brilliant sun,

Just now rising,

There are diamonds in the water,

That sparkle unbelievably bright

Joy, as I am unable to imagine, fills my body, I feel more alive than I ever had before

—Carolyn Zhang



we, the ocean children

```
we were born with sand in our fists and
      salt on our tongue, drinking honeyed sun
           from Mother Earth before milk from our
mothers;
      tasting pearls of ocean rain before
           we could cry.
      shhhhhh, the waves would whisper
           weaving together the squawks of gulls
      and crashing of waves until it was not cacophony,
      but a symphony, a
           tapestry of gold and silver—
                 a gentle hymn swaying in the
           wind—
      long fingers brushing our face and pinching our
           cheeks as a grandmother
                 would.
so even as we stood,
      surrounded by flickering neon and
           car horns blaring,
                 stinking of sweat and city ash,
      we closed our eyes and felt the spray
```

of mist once more; the slippery ropes of kelp circling our feet.

our heart thrums as it always has—we are home.

—Maithreyi Bharathi

Over the Sea

The tall stone mountains that stretch along the California coast. Their dirty bodies smell like a whiff of brown acrylic paint sitting in the dry hot sun. Standing there, gazing over the amazing view of the vast ocean, they seem to know more than time itself since life first started. Always still and quiet, as if asleep for centuries, before moving together into a bigger, taller family.

-Devon Mann

Remember

Remember, there is a girl somewhere, standing still by the sea,

who is at peace with feeling small and insignificant

before the layers upon layers of nature and history

that she merely touches the surface of with her own two feet—

the surface of her tiny piece of California.

—Sydney Mielcarski

A Romance on a Rainy Beach

A Romance on a Rainy Beach #1

Hair wet, but feet dry Dancing beneath a gray sky For even seas cry

A Romance on a Rainy Beach #2

I am a letter Enveloped in your waters Sent away to fade

A Romance on a Rainy Beach #3

Don't shy from the sand
If the waves appear daunting
I will help you swim

-Matthew Oda



Not Your Average Artist

Huntington State Beach Magnolia Smoke Stacks

Every day
I wake up to
Construction workers
Stores are opening
The gates
To the beach are opening

I suit up
Grab my surfboard
Hear the waves crashing in the distance
Catalina just on the horizon
The sand
Cold as ice
The water
Colder than ice

I see
An empty canvas
My surfboard is the paintbrush
I am the artist

I paint my picture

Just for it

To Wash away

Like a Sand Mandala

I wake up every day
6 o'clock in the morning
To see the beautiful sight
And paint my picture

—Mason Espinoza

Seas

From my view outside
the deep green expanse
is infinite,
like the depths
of the water past the waves
that are only a drive,
forty-five minutes away.
Past the rows of green

turns ash, dried leaves and branches fallen, charred-black boughs and hollowed black stumps.

It's almost like the layer of clear to blue, getting deeper in color, until you are in a sea of complete blackness.

Past the ash, however,

the vibrant green rows come back.
The black depths are finite, too,
but infinite in that there is
no sea beyond them,
past the depth's end at the bottom.

—Donald Grijalva Baker

Algal Bloom

The algae floats atop a fragile wave like star dust in the milky way.
But as far apart as they may seem the algae know when to glow and gleam.
Like striking a match, the waves blur into neon blue and curtains of foam ignite.
They make it seem so easy, to link hands and unite.

—Alyssa Ho

Briny Cravings in a Dream

This is not the first time you wonder why the ocean drowns your body in long-drawn exhales. Buoyancy as deception. Tongue bulbous with expectation. You ask why the moon tugs at the current like squandered heartstrings. You look for lost things on the shore: half-baked sandcastles, an eyeglass, seagull. Perhaps you are not here at all. In the crack of dawn you will gorge on saltwater memories, hunger as a memento for lost adolescence. Seabreeze thick with longing, the frills of

your sundress as creases
on books of poetry. Again,
wonder why you were
born a fisherman's
daughter. You fasten
prayers into the horizon,
the waves heedless.

—Jessica Kim