



# The Tulane Review

Spring 2025



## **The Tulane Review**

The Tulane Review is a literary and art journal published by the Tulane Literary Society. Submissions are judged in an anonymous selection process, and final choices are made by the respective editors. Submission information can be found on the last page of this publication.

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**Dedicated to New Orleans**

# The Tulane Review Editorial Staff

Kaya Konevitch  
Editor-in-Chief

Kaya Konevitch is currently pursuing a B.S. in Mathematics and English at Tulane University, where she blends analytical rigor with creative problem-solving. Passionate about utilizing data to uncover patterns, drive equitable decisions, and address real-world challenges, Kaya thrives at the intersection of quantitative analysis and narrative communication. With a dual foundation in logic and storytelling, Kaya is eager to apply her skills to design impactful, data-driven solutions.

Olivia McCabe  
Prose Editor

Olivia McCabe is a senior at Tulane, where she is pursuing a double-major in English and Political Science. As the Prose Editor for the Tulane Review, she has loved collaborating with her fellow editors to bring the 2025 edition to life. She has contributed prose and poetry to this collection, and is most passionate about blending her interests in literature and politics.

Remi Bass  
Poetry Editor

Remi Bass is a senior at Tulane studying Philosophy and English, with a concentration in Creative Writing and a minor in Strategy, Leadership, and Analytics (SLAM). As the Poetry Editor for the Tulane Review, she has been grateful for the opportunity to workshop with fellow editors to continue the revival of the publication. In her free time, she enjoys going on walks with her roommate's dog, Boots, watching A24 films, and discovering new restaurants around New Orleans.

Jason Mulvihill  
Art & Design Editor

Jason Mulvihill is a senior at Tulane double-majoring in Medieval & Early Modern Studies and English with a minor in History. He aspires for a career in publishing.

# Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

As the days grow longer, graduation around the corner, and the magnolias bloom across campus, we are thrilled to present the Spring 2025 issue of the *Tulane Review*. This edition is a testament to the creativity, intellect, and bold voices that define our community as we continue to shape the future we envision.

The pieces in these pages traverse a wide emotional and intellectual landscape - from shattered realities uncovering our own biases, to incisive essays that challenge our perceptions of art, identity, and society. Poetry hums with rhythm and rebellion, while visual art interrupts the ordinary, inviting us to see the world anew. Long after the last letter has been read, these pieces continue to linger in our minds.

This semester, we've been especially inspired by works that grapple with transformation - both personal and collective. In a time of rapid change, the writers and artists featured here ask urgent questions: How do we navigate uncertainty? Where do we find connection? What does it mean to create - or resist - in an evolving world? Their answers are as varied as they are compelling.

A special thanks to our dedicated contributors and our editorial team, whose talent and courage make this journal possible. To our readers: may you find in these pages a spark of recognition, a moment of wonder, or perhaps even the seed of your own next great idea.

With gratitude,

Kaya Konevitch  
Editor-in-Chief

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Jason thanks Professor Mike Kuczynski for Bibliography & Research Method, as well as Jody Gerbig for her summers-ago wisdom. To Professor Adam McKeown: I await the next frigid wave.

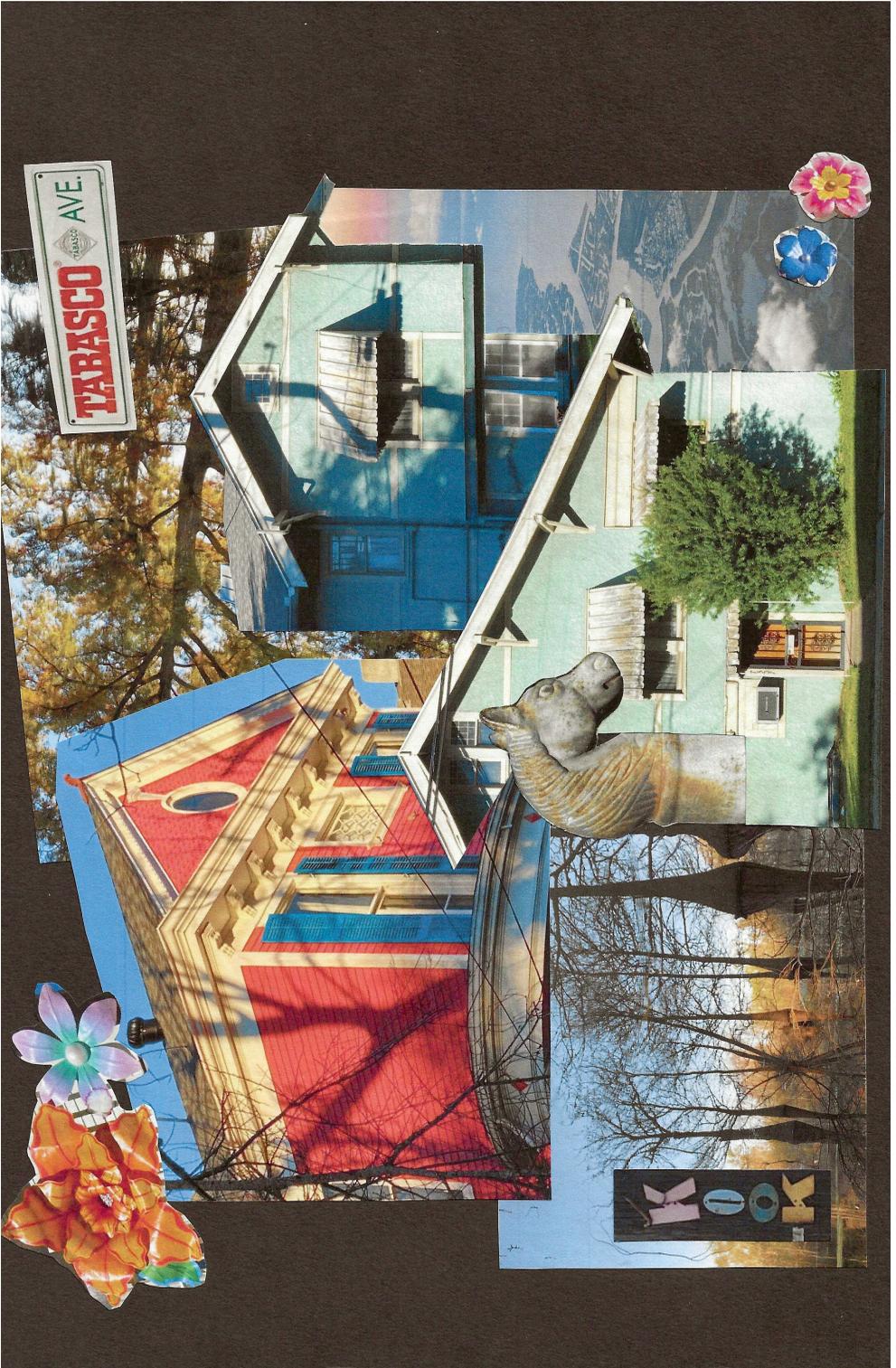


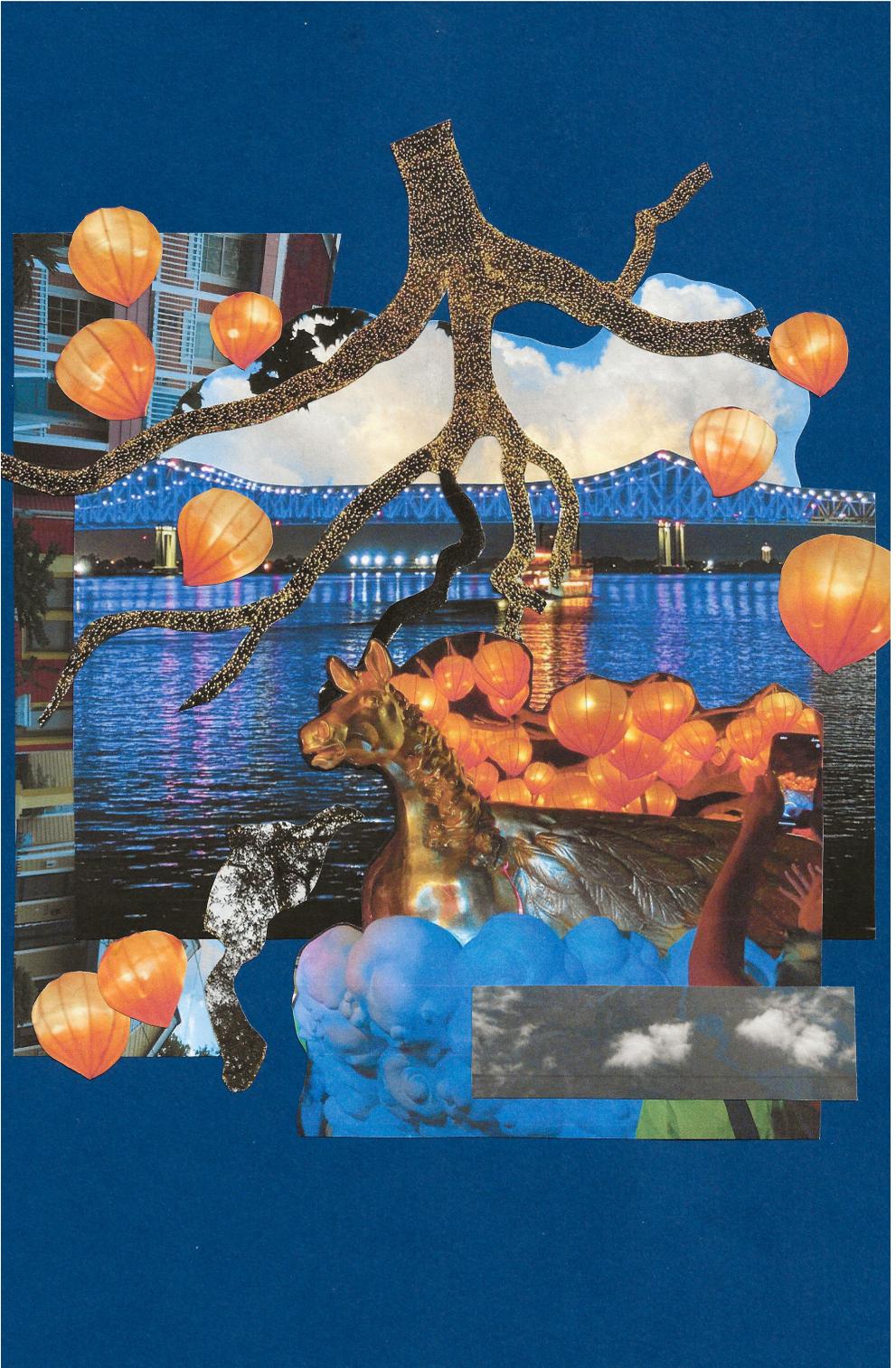
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# “New Orleans” Rae Stevenson

Rae Stevenson is a photographer and collage artist. Influenced by her family of modernist architects, Rae particularly enjoys exploring geometry and composition through her artwork. Rae is especially drawn to documenting places which evoke strong memories for her, such as her chosen home of New Orleans and childhood neighborhood in Raleigh, NC. She is interested in the way that photography redacts contextual information outside of an image’s frame, leaving behind a fragment of a memory. She sees this as an exercise in both composition and the creation of meaning.





# “a letter for a poet”

Olivia McCabe

What is poetry  
But words on a page  
A song from my heart  
A tale to tell  
A note that rings in my mind  
That flows through my veins  
Begs to be called  
Begs to be made  
And somehow remains  
What is it  
but letters and spaces I lay  
What is poetry  
But the soul unhatched  
It strikes from a feeling  
A song  
A scent  
It sparks and it rings  
It forces my hand  
The words take my pain  
Turn fire to sand  
They calm the burn  
As their forms take meaning  
My breath can return  
To read what I've done  
The horror I've made  
And slowly I realize  
The pieces I've laid  
The world comes together  
The world is ok

What is poetry  
But suffering remade

# “March After Mardi Gras”

Olivia Apatini

You consoled, you know me  
and therefore love me,  
cigarette dangling delicately,  
like a grainy cartoon from the eighties  
with faint rustles and mutters  
fizzing out the speaker.  
The smoke unfurls, a dull roar like  
noisemakers in the next room.

Spring begins in sixteen days,  
and I'm afraid of what it carries.  
It will be too sticky for sweaters  
of knitted wool which itches  
but is blissful in the cold.

Tonight the sky is indigo,  
a backdrop to a mansion  
glowing white with coral windows.  
To its right, a crumbling house  
melts into rugged disrepair.  
I like the night's reminder  
that such things can coexist.

No matter how you love me,  
the word is just as lovely.  
Bubbles colored by a disco ball  
oversaw us as I wound myself in  
knots around your palm.  
By now, they have all gone,  
and it was hot that night  
and long, and I was  
pulsing with an ache lodged in my heart,

But it was sparkling, too,  
and soft.

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I caught satin, rose, embossed  
with a glimmer of vague voodoo,  
embodying the madness that  
you'd pick an ingenue,  
and I would trip over the sidewalk  
to be stumbling next to you;

to be a luminescent fool,  
to cough the smoke,  
the smiles, the tulle.

**Olivia Apatini is a twenty-one-year-old studying English Literature with a Creative Writing concentration at Tulane University. She began writing poetry at twelve years old before self-publishing her collection, *To Walk With Pretty Ghosts*, at seventeen years old. She grew up between New Orleans and Mandeville, Louisiana, and she now lives in Tremé. In addition to writing, Olivia loves to sing, paint, explore New Orleans, and surround herself with her friends and her cats.**

# “ibises”

Meah Matherne

we flit from red-lit bar  
to red lit bar  
like orange, needle-beaked ibises,  
clucking over the same grass  
that we have picked through for years.  
we giggle, in our gaggle,  
out of place in-between  
the brightly colored houses,  
filled with sleeping children  
and hypoallergenic dogs,  
only to arrive at our own dusty roost,  
wearied by the weight of it all.

Meah Matherne is a graduating Tulane senior from Houston, Texas whose love of literature and learning led her to major in English and Political Economy, and minor in Spanish while studying under the oaks of New Orleans. She has written poetry for as long as she can remember, winning two Gold Keys in the Scholastic Art & Writing contest in 2022, and began participating in slam poetry readings with Write About Now Poetry in Houston while she was in high school. Meah hopes to publish her own collection of poetry someday and knows that her time in New Orleans will always permeate her work. Following graduation, Meah plans to work for a few years before returning to law school to deal with the written word in a whole new way. She is endlessly thankful to the Tulane Literary Society for publishing her work.



**“Culture Bearers” & “Jellyfish”**  
**Kaya Konevitch**





# “Animal Farm, 80 Years Later”

Olivia McCabe

Here we are already, diving back into one of Orwell’s classics to help us cope with the state of the world. George Orwell of course. This re-read has been long overdue for me. I first encountered it in high school, where we discovered Orwell’s reputation for exposing the root of capitalist exploitation and societal decay. Albeit I probably only read the first and last ten pages. Maybe. But I definitely listened in class.

Reading *Animal Farm* now, after taking a Comparative Politics class this past spring, felt especially compelling. In this course we studied governmental hierarchies, revolutions, and different regime types – authoritarian, totalitarian, fascist, among other, more mundane things.

Through this so-called “fairy tale” (as it’s often referred to in the preface), I saw a clear and inevitable trajectory of a certain kind of power: the erasure of social classes, the distortion of reality, and the construction of a new narrative where everything and nothing is true—all of which are necessary conditions for totalitarianism, authoritarianism’s big brother (wink wink).

Later in the novel, we see another hallmark of these regimes: the creation of a political enemy and scapegoat. Squealer immediately brands Snowball a traitor, twisting history and claiming Snowball’s ideas as Napoleon’s own. The animals, with no choice but to believe, or face punishment, accept this rewriting of reality — an essential mechanism of totalitarian rule. In such environments, the individual is reduced to a mere cog in the machine, wholly absorbed into the state. What is coming to mind for you right now?

Téa Obreht’s introduction was particularly striking, as she wove her own experiences into her reading of the novel. She reshaped my understanding of Benjamin, the donkey, who can be seen as a representative of older generations, those who have lived through countless regimes, witnessed every betrayal and false promise, and learned that survival often means staying silent. He understands that all leaders — regardless of their initial intentions — possess an innate thirst for power,

one they will do anything to satisfy. The transition of power really is a gamble.

Obrecht's preface also reminded me of an essay I wrote on the distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Not all authoritarian states are destined to become totalitarian, as Orwell might suggest. While *Animal Farm* illustrates how power can spiral into absolute control, history reminds us that authoritarian governments do not always evolve into the full-fledged nightmares of fascism or totalitarian rule. Human nature is not predisposed to submission without resistance. This is something I try to hammer into my mind every morning when I wake up and read the news.

Russell Baker's afterword was another highlight of the novel, providing a sharp reflection on Orwell himself. He notes that Orwell possessed a unique "aloneness" and "an insistence on being his own man, on not playing along with the team as the loyal Politician is so often expected to do." I wish we still had this own-man today.

Baker also leaves us with a chillingly timeless statement: *Animal Farm* "left us a lesson about the human contribution to political terror that will always be as up-to-date as next year's election." Decades later, this still rings true. Orwell's classic remains an unflinching portrayal of how quickly authoritarianism can lead to totalitarianism, exploitation, and the cyclical nature of political oppression — issues that persist today as sharply as they did then.

Recommended books to follow :

- *Darkness at Noon*
- *Brave New World*
- *The Circle*

# “How I Was Wrong About the South / Why Tulane”

Ali Saunders

I never thought that I would end up in the South for college, or ever for that matter. I had always imagined myself somewhere that was familiar and comforting. I grew up peacefully, surrounded by the beautiful and familiar changing of the seasons, brutally hot summer to a refreshingly crisp autumn. The color of the leaves became synonymous with happiness to me. In the winter I would go out and play in the snow, with people who were just like me.

My friend group consisted of five blonde girls – we called ourselves the blondies, and we became friends because of just that. It was what we had in common. I went throughout my adolescence keeping this pattern in mind: when you find people who are the same as you in interests, in appearance and in life, you will feel like you belong. With everything around me staying comfortably the same, I can and will forever happily say that I loved my childhood. And I cannot express how grateful I am to be able to say that.

I think I started to feel different when I was in the second grade. It wasn't like anything was astronomically wrong with me, I was just the tom-boy of the grade, and whatever that seemed to mean I didn't have a clue. All I knew was that when people looked at my long gym shorts and soccer jerseys they thought I was different. This was the first time in my life when I found friends that I viewed as “different,” as I was once again searching for people who I thought I was supposed to like.

I specifically remember the first time I interacted with someone who was very different from me. A boy named Ross from the South who was staying with his uncle in Massachusetts in the seventh grade. I really liked Ross – he was funny, incredibly kind and charismatic, and I remember he made everyone in the school play laugh. He sometimes had a temper, but I remember that I didn't mind much because I could tell he was a good person. Before meeting Ross I believed that actions were a direct correlation to a person's goodness. That a good person did good things, and bad did bad.

At lunch one day I was sitting at the table across from Ross when he abruptly got up and started choking one of my other classmates. I stood up and begged for him to stop, the boy starting to turn blue. Ross then looked at me, stopped choking the boy, and ran away. That was the last time I ever saw him. I found out many years later that Ross had grown up on the streets, and that violence was the only way he knew to defend himself. Ever since that day I have grappled with what it means to be good or bad, and I came to my own conclusion that there are not many truly bad people. Just people who can't say that they loved their childhood, or that their mom made them cookies every day after soccer practice.

In that moment I learned empathy. As I went through high school in a very liberal and wealthy town in Massachusetts, people of opposing views were often villainized and criticized. The South was, since I was young, portrayed as a place of hate and evil, idiotic people. When someone said they wanted to go to the South it was assumed that they had some sort of ulterior motive, that they were hateful, or that they were just stupid. As I continued my college search I unconsciously kept these views in mind, admittedly scared to go south because of what I had heard from the people around me.

However, when I got the opportunity to be a part of Tulane's track and field team everything changed – my mind was opened wide to this incredible university that has everything I wanted in a school. It was perfect, but I had never considered it because it was in a state that I was scared of. As a queer person, I was afraid to tell my friends that I would be going on a visit here, and many people reacted with caution and fear as I told them. “Will you be safe?”, “Will people hate you?” they asked. After a while, however, I wasn't scared in the slightest.

Throughout my junior and senior years, I applied what I had learned from my life and put it into perspective. I decided that going to the South would not only be an amazing opportunity to attend school and compete in sports, but it would also allow me to pursue what has been my main goal in life, which is to gain empathy. I explained to myself and to my friends that you cannot truly hate someone that you loved first. I decided I would go to New Orleans, to the South, hoping to find people with differing views and opinions and to love them anyway, and hope that eventually they would love me too.

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Within the first week, I have been more than blown away with how much I feel at home. I have never in my life felt more accepted and whole. I understand this may not be everyone's experience, but I am so grateful to Tulane and the people here. And I can genuinely say from what I have viewed so far that I was wrong about the South. And I can't wait to see what else it has to offer.

Alexandra “Ali” Saunders is an up-and-coming writer from Harvard, Massachusetts. Her work varies but is mostly focused on what she believes to be the most important things in the world: love and empathy. Ali has written various poems, children’s stories, op-eds, and continues to work on various longer books. Ali also enjoys capturing life through film photography, especially capturing moments of the joys of her life. Aside from her work in writing, Ali is a Division 1 Javelin Thrower on the Track and Field team at Tulane. She loves the Red Sox, Princess Diana, and being with people she loves.



# Yasmin Falcon

Yasmin Falcon is a senior at Tulane University, pursuing a double-major in Sociology and Latin American Studies with a minor in Studio Arts. As a first-generation college student, Yasmin is proud to be graduating this spring, marking a significant milestone in her academic journey. Deeply committed to her community, she actively serves on the board of Free Alas, a local non-profit dedicated to uplifting underserved populations.





# “An Elevator’s Farewell”

Olivia McCabe

Once a woman stepped in and never looked up,  
or to the side, left or right, nor down, not once.  
Just like this, I brought her all the way to the top.  
On floor 24 her phone rang, over and over, until at least 38.  
She didn't even flinch! I was appalled. She didn't even blink!  
Oh, did it bother me. She was bizarre. Finally 45, *ding*, out she went.  
I didn't realize I'd been holding my breath. Never before did they do anything but  
just, stare. 45 will always give me the chills.

Often a pair would stumble in, sometimes ablaze,  
sometimes their hesitations made even me nervous.  
I loved those nights. Valentine's day 1997,  
a couple bursts in, falls to the floor.  
There they lay laughing 'til I delivered them home.  
Floor 52! And the whole ride they laughed.  
I get butterflies every time I pass it,  
even to this day. I love you, 52.

One bitter night in November, I've lost the year but  
not too long ago, a boy ran into my arms, just as I closed,  
mindlessly, manically, drunk - devilishly, deliriously, happy.  
His foot caught nothing and suddenly his head split open.  
Rolled out in a stretcher. His blood, everywhere.  
After he was wheeled away, his friends called me again.  
*Let's order food - maybe Chinese?* I dropped them at 4.  
They could've just taken the stairs.

On weekdays from eight-to-nine and the rest from ten-to-ten  
a man pushed my buttons, greeting our guests.  
Thursday night, five years ago, he left at 9:05 and never came back.  
He left me here, all alone. That's when I began to slow down my gears,  
to break every week. I was trying to tell them.  
I was tired, constantly containing people who never gave  
me a second thought. And now, finally, they're taking me apart.  
Next Monday they get to work, I heard just this morning.  
I can't believe my life is at its end.

And yet, I think, I'm glad.

I hope when I'm released I'm reborn as a car,  
a bright yellow taxi cab. I'll finally see the world,  
instead of just those who occupy it.

I'll see that strange woman,

staring directly down the street as she strides only straight, never looking right or left.

I'll once again carry the couple from the floor, entangled in my back seat.

I'll take the long way home to give them more time.

I'll see that boy again, now a man, a scar stretched tightly across his forehead,  
clambering into me with a briefcase, dressed in a suit.

I hope I see him again, the man who pushed that button.

Perhaps he will be my driver.

Ah, lately I'm losing myself in my past. How could I not? I think I'll miss my  
mild days, and those nights when it felt like faces flashed  
forever. and I thought they'd never stop.

maybe I am worried. just a bit. should I be afraid?

well, by now it's too late. my whole life I've been full,

with flourishing light,

now my cables strain, like the strings of a heart,

with no one to carry

with no one to watch.

as my day draws closer, I can't help but wonder

what will I do, if when my time comes

a memory is all I become.

# “Flora of New Orleans”

Leah Starr

Her youth was defined by delicacy. Countless eyes fixed on her fragility years before hands came back to poke and grab and want. Comparison plagued her existence. She spoke only for herself, but her voice could sail through the air like a siren. The first time I saw her I was a young child, hand-in-hand with my mother as she dragged me through the park, reminding me that staring was unladylike. Somehow I knew that she didn't mind.

I had my earliest memory at the age of three. I remember scraping so deep into the flesh on my arms that my mother pinned me down and cut my nails so short they bled. I still have the scars on my forearms from the scratching and the fear of contracting shingles burned in my brain, both of which are cause for concern each year when my annual check-up goes from scoliosis to suicide with the removal of my jacket. While my first memory sounds grim, it also brought me to her.

My mother didn't work so that meant she was always there when I needed her. And being an only child, I needed her, a lot. When I came downstairs in early November, fingers sore from scratching the rosy bumps forming within my skin, she took me to the doctor immediately. When they were no help, she took me outside. While November in New Orleans doesn't connote snow or shade, it was a crisp day and the air cooled my skin as we walked. My mother took me through the park as it was a Tuesday morning and most people were at work. We walked swiftly and I kept my head down, ashamed of my spots, but as the park got more crowded, and my mother snatched my hand and forced my pace, I looked up and saw her.

I don't remember much from the years following. When my mother passed away I was left alone with my father, who, though he tried his best, was no match for the trials of girlhood. I made my first friend in kindergarten. I guess choosing 'fig' as a food that started with the same first letter as my name wasn't the demurest choice I could have made. But despite my original disapproval of Anne, whose curiosity drew her to me and led with a multitude of questions about figs, we grew to become

best friends. Anne's first and final question to me was, "Flora, can you bring me a fig tomorrow?"

When I was twelve, and old enough to wander outside with my friends, Anne and I walked to the park. We sat on the bench for hours analyzing people based on their choice of music or walking shoes. Just as my curious stare began to blur, it was broken by a loud jazz tune that overtook the natural soundscape. As the tune gained volume, a man approached from around the bend, strolling through the park with his horn and infecting the nearby walkers with wide, gummy smiles. Men carrying briefcases and women pushing strollers smiled serendipitously, nodding their heads to the *almost* organic sounds of the trumpet. However, my ears were scanning the spring symphony for something softer.

Once the solo second line passed, I closed my eyes and opened my ears to the layer of sound that exists for itself, but I couldn't hear anything that sounded familiar. Upset and suddenly alone, Anne and I walked home. I returned the next day to the park, with no one by my side. Walking through the park that next day, I suspended one leg out in front of the other, my red rainboots leaving small footprints in the muddy grass that bubbled and disappeared as if they were alive. Once I made it to the concrete path, I walked aimlessly, unsure of where she might be, or if she was even here at all. However, my doubts melted away quicker than the mud on my boots as the sun came out and I could see her behind an oak tree, waving at me. As the breeze settled, and the sun continued to shine, I walked over.

Because Anne was at home catching up on some class reading, we were all alone, her and I. I sat down next to her under the shade of the tall oak trees that surrounded us and we didn't talk, we didn't need to. I don't know if she felt in me the same familiarity I felt in her, my young age leaving me with a weak image of her from our first encounter. She had the essence of a woman who's lost a child, a deep longing for what was once hers paired with an organic appreciation for life. Maybe that is why she felt so comfortable to me, a motherless child. As the sun began to set, and dinner time approached, I left the park, hopeful to see her again soon.

My next few years continued like this, trips to the park to meet my older and wiser friend. She was always waiting in the same spot when I

arrived and stood tall even after I left, altering my view of the park until I forgot what it looked like without her in it. I showed up excited with snacks and a journal, engaged with watercolors or pencils, upset with tissues, or calm with a quilt. I showed up often, and on the anniversary of my mom's death, I woke up and immediately went to visit her, pleased to see her in the park so early.

I used to find it weird that my mother passed away in April, the beginning of the season marked by birth and life. The day of her funeral I remember seeing trees in bloom, bright pinks and yellows starkly contrasting the black of my dress, my shoes, my ankle socks. When I walked through the park ten years later, I saw the same flowers pushing themselves into my view, littering the path I walked on, and I wished they would hide themselves for the day. I wanted the entire park to mourn my mother with me.

I kept my head down, sporadic tears falling straight onto the path below me, until she entered my field of view and I looked up. To my surprise, she was bearing flowers. We sat in silence as I questioned her comparatively muted, monochrome bouquet, wishing she would match my mourner's attire, until I pushed myself off the ground, and walked home, cutting our time short.

As I walked back on the concrete path, I noticed the pink and yellow flowers I had seen all over the trees in crumpled bundles smashed between sticky fingers, or worse, on the ground to be stepped on until their color bled onto shoe soles and all they had left was their delicate frame. I've always learned that the more colorful the flower the better, to attract pollinators. But it's the muted flower, the one that survives until the end of the season, that receives affection from the more patient, more timid pollinators, who take great care in their job, that spreads more steadily. I thought about my favorite children's book, the one where the tortoise beats the hare, and I smiled, thinking that she saw enough potential in me to present me with a bland bouquet.

As I sat in bed that night, I continued to ponder her flower choice. The flowers' vivacious nature representing death just as much as they did life. The people I passed that day had little interest in them, too blinded by the plethora of neon ornamentation. The initial distrust and surprise I felt seeing her bouquet was clouded by tears when I realized she brought those flowers for herself, and I wondered why.

My high school studies began to pick up, and I wasn't left with much time to go to the park during daylight after spending hours on my homework. I longed to feel her presence, but Anne's company filled my days with enough laughter to fulfil myself for a few years.

Hanging out with Anne was fun. It was fun in the same way that running to catch the ice cream truck is fun. It was innocent, and pure, and happy. I walked up to school one Monday morning in early June to find Anne's outstretched arms revealing a beige muffin, bleeding reddish-blue goo into its plastic wrapping. She did this often. I'm not sure if it was her decision or her mom's to try and make me forget I didn't have a mother of my own by supplying me with more than enough baked goods to last through the year, but I didn't mind. I enjoyed her mom's baking and it only took a few weeks of awkwardly picking at strawberry muffins for her to realize I prefer blueberry.

While she went out of her way to make sure I wasn't deprived of these "motherly" offerings, she never made me feel less than, and I appreciated that. And besides, any muffins she brought me were repaid in full from the amount of time I spent editing her English essays, or her history papers, or giving her chapter summaries of the books we were assigned to read in class. She never did have enough time to read our class books. She was off doing stuff with her mom, I guess.

With Anne, I could escape my thoughts for hours. We probably spent more time laughing than we did talking. We met the same year we learned how to tell jokes, and our humor evolved together. We knew exactly what to say to make the other laugh from a place deep inside their belly. It's hard to imagine a place so deep inside myself that I can't control, but I've always been comforted by what I can't control, and Anne was no different.

When Anne didn't show up to my locker before class on the last Monday of the school year, I was sure her mom let her sleep in. But when I didn't see her on Tuesday, I was concerned.

After school I went by Anne's house and found her lying on the couch, her mom petting her hair. She smiled when she saw me, a weak smile that I understood as, "Hi Flora, I love you and I'm sorry." We never said *I love you* to each other, I saved that for my mom and she saved it for

the boys who followed her around after school, but I do know she was sorry. Her apology referring to the fact that without her, I had no one; a slip-up in our mutual understanding to not mention this fact, but I forgive her.

At Anne's funeral, I cried into my sleeve, my snot leaving trails that shimmered against the black cotton of my cardigan. It wasn't cold, but I knew better than to forget my cardigan. I always shivered when I cried, a fact I learned about myself almost fifteen years ago when the body in the ground looked more like me.

I was always short of death. The universe choosing my best companions instead, leaving me Earthbound and alone and wondering when it would be my turn to lay down my head for the last time. Surrendering myself to the earth was something I didn't fear. I'm not suicidal, although my pediatrician had a hard time believing, but I also don't fear death. My mother never looked as beautiful as she did lying in her casket.

I wasn't sure of my own beauty, but I felt very confident in my mother's and Anne's. It was as if dying was the ultimate test of beauty, and I had yet to pass. One day I would be as beautiful as the neon flowers that mocked my sadness in the park. They only had to wait a few months to die; I had to wait a lifetime.

In late July my father insisted that we have a graduation party. I wasn't too excited about the idea of writing up a list of invitees, now that my best and really only friend was unable to attend, but he bought balloons. I convinced him to let me have the party in the park, and because that meant it was free, he didn't put up much of a fight. We spent the morning setting out place settings and decorations and catching ourselves in melancholic thought, to which we quickly overrode with talk of Christmas break, bedroom décor, and Uga sightings.

I'm not going to say people only showed up because my best friend was dead, but that is what it seemed like, being that Anne's name was spoken more times than mine. It was a nice party, however, and I spoke to a few classmates who were also headed to Georgia. With an invitation to carpool, I was sure of my frequent visits home to New Orleans. I was hopelessly naïve about that sort of thing. I waved goodbye to the last guest as she walked out of sight and immediately collapsed into the

closest chair. My father offered to clean the party up by himself, so I used my free time to walk around the park, not wanting to go too far with the risk of seeming rude.

I didn't have to stroll far before I ran into her, sitting in her usual spot. I had been so caught up in my studies and hadn't seen her in months, and to my surprise, we weren't alone. In the few minutes it took for me to find the perfect patch of grass to sink the seat of my pants into, a patch devoid of sticks and mud, upwards of five people came over.

While she usually looked peaceful and content, today her arms were outstretched and bent in a visible strain, holding the weight of her offerings. Mothers smiled at her, nudging their children to run over and collect some of the fruit she had brought. It was an interesting sight. Each fruit taken reduced her weight and eased the tension in her arms, leaving her lighter but also drained and depressingly less and less like herself. I couldn't tell if she wanted me to take fruit as a token of our friendship and out of respect for her time, but I couldn't help the eerie feeling I got, like I was stealing a part of her. I decided to leave the fruit alone, and let her reap the benefits, hoping she would have some left to enjoy after a full day of being poked at by pedestrians.

As the park started to clear out, I leaned in close, and told her goodbye, for now. I was leaving for Georgia and wouldn't be back for a few months. I would miss her friendship while I was gone, and I was pretty sure she would miss mine as well.

My first day in Georgia was refreshingly cool. Much cooler than the New Orleans summers I was used to. I organized my bedroom, met my roommate, said goodbye to my father, and took a trip to the local record store, to stock up on some used vinyl before classes started. I picked up *are you experienced* by Jimi Hendrix, *The Greatest Hits* by the Eagles, and one lime green record called *Jazz Band Ball*, with songs by George Lewis for a nostalgic flare. I got home and immediately taped the jazz album to my wall, above my desk, as I was never actually the biggest fan of jazz, and George Lewis was before my time anyway.

Despite my honest effort to acclimate quickly, I ripped the jazz album off my wall on my third day and just as I had hoped, it reminded me of the music my parents used to play when I was young. I was a little

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embarrassed that it only took three days of missing New Orleans to realize the calm cool of jazz music that soothed my nerves, dissolved the lump in my throat, and lightened my mood, but hey, at least I learned what it means to miss New Orleans. I now responded *unfortunately, yes* to the title of another New Orleans classic that my parents loved.

Once classes started and I got introduced to the reading list for the semester, which included *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* by Carson McCullers, I assumed my regular position, as the only student who was actually going to read these books and felt very comfortably *at home* in my new world.

Freshman year quickly turned into senior year and as I walked across the stage at graduation, I wondered how it had been four years since I had left my New Orleans home, only to return on Christmas and Thanksgivings. I opted to stay the summers in Georgia, and if you have ever been to New Orleans in the summer, you would understand why.

I waved to my father as I grabbed my diploma, a Bachelor's in English, and stepped off the stage, entering into the world for the first time as my own woman. *Student* was no longer an appropriate title and *daughter* felt tired, so here I was, walking into the world as *Flora from New Orleans*.

When my favorite book shop by campus offered me a position as an editorial assistant, I couldn't refuse. So, I continued to spend my time in Georgia, growing my appreciation for the significantly cheaper restaurant meals that carried me through college and still remained a luxury for me on my assistant salary.

I quickly adjusted to the mundanity of post-graduate life, or I guess what most people would just call *life*. If it wasn't for the unfortunate call I got from my father one Wednesday morning, to which I put down the book I was holding and exited the book store entirely, I don't think I would have returned home for years, a thought that began to haunt me.

My father told me that he was sick. Not sick in his *it's almost spring* way or sick in his *I was just out at dinner with friends* way but *sick* sick in the way that I got in my car and started driving to New Orleans, immediately. The drive back to New Orleans, which was usually a joyous one of nostalgia and reunion, was filled with an unfortunate and familiar sadness.

They say once your first family member dies, the rest get easier. But, for me, it was the opposite, each death a forceful wind in the perpetual storm that was my life. The sun came out for brief periods but never shone bright enough to warm my skin before the wind picked back up, leaving me shivering and crying into my sleeve.

Attending my father's funeral was the hardest thing I ever had to do. I could never imagine a lonelier event, only to be followed by the loneliest of lives. While the congregation traveled back to my family home for an extended service, I split off and ventured out to find the only friend I had left.

And now I've caught back up to today. Obviously I've skipped around and left out major chunks of my life, but whatever I have recounted must have been very emotionally important for me, as I can't seem to accurately remember the rest right now in my overwhelming blur of emotion.

As I walked around the park once, I felt confused; maybe my tears blinded me from seeing her. I walked around again, and again, and she was nowhere to be found. I kept walking in circles, hoping to find her and knowing I had no one to return home to, until I found a pile of fruit and a bouquet of white flowers sitting in a spot marked by the most perfect crevasse for a young girl to rest herself into. Someone must have pulled too hard, poked too forcefully because she was gone and was never coming back.

Everyone I've ever loved is dead. So I sit here, next to where we used to meet in the park, surrounded by old flowers and rotting fruit, and I write for the last time, about my friend, the fig tree, finally recognizing my own beauty.

Leah Starr is a graduating senior at Tulane University, studying English, Environmental Studies, and Art History. Passionate about sustainability and advocacy, she founded and served as president of Epsilon Eta, Tulane's professional environmental fraternity, and co-directed the university's first student-run Earth Day Festival. She has also led The Women's Network, written for *The Tulane Hullabaloo*, and is a member of Sigma Tau Delta and Phi Alpha Delta. Off campus, she worked at Stag Liuzza, a plaintiff-oriented environmental litigation law firm in New Orleans. Recently, she presented her written work at the International English Honor Society Convention in Pittsburgh. In her free time, Leah enjoys yoga, long-distance running, and experimenting with new vegan recipes.

# “you and your beautiful soul” Dedicated to college students losing their minds!

Ali Saunders

Someone somewhere will  
understand your soul

And they will love that soul  
with everything that they have

Because you deserve to be loved

As the kite cherishes the wind

As the tree bonds earnestly to the earth

As the mother gazes upon the daughter with vast doe eyes

Someone somewhere will love

You and your beautiful soul

## Bella Mainiero

Bella Mainiero is a junior at Tulane University studying Neuroscience and Studio Art. Inspired by the energy and colors of New Orleans, her work often captures the city's character and movement. When she's not painting, she's exploring the brain—both in the lab and as a neuroscience instructor. She is also the president and founder of Art TU Kids, a group dedicated to aiding art therapists for children in the hospital. Bella hopes to keep creating, learning, and finding connections between science and art.



# “Isolation”

Willa Watts

At night we lay alone  
Dark and dim over rattling bones  
The wood decayed and frayed and soft  
Above my heart etched out and in.

Here's the land we once delighted,  
The sun I felt this sleep has blighted.  
Years could pass without a touch  
I think, at times, I had wished too much.

For now, my life sits carved in stone  
Though surrounded I remain alone  
This cave of sorts where I'm preserved  
In the end, what was deserved?

The world above, the intersection of souls  
desperate for the magnificence  
Soon all lives drift off untold  
They fall scattered,  
forever filling these infinite holes.

**Willa Watts is a native of New York City. She enjoys spending her time writing poetry and philosophizing about modernity. She has been in and out of New Orleans and considers it to always be a rich source of inspiration.**



# Sofia Olexia-Daigle

Sofia Olexia-Daigle makes art as an opportunity for self-expression. She has a deep appreciation for women and the environment. Much of her work centers on women's strengths and challenges as mothers, daughters, professionals, and caregivers, as well as the societal barriers they face. In her work, she includes women of all backgrounds, regardless of race, body shape, or identity. As a Louisiana native, she is inspired by the natural environment and incorporates wetlands, wildlife elements, and New Orleans architecture into select works.





# “The Beads Stayed”

*Hurricane Francine, September 11th 2024*

*-for New Orleans*

Inspired by *Family Evacuation with Gulf Fritillary Caterpillars* By Andy Young

Ali Saunders

It was only days before the storm  
I first discovered the cradling oaks of Audubon  
I made my way across campus and to the park

Looking intently upon the trees I loved the most.  
My gaze intense but not as vigilant as the  
locals to the city I had been surrounded by

who continued to work and play as the readings of the storm came in.  
Mothers and daughters on the swing-set  
A saxophone player on the street corner

Their lives continuing with strength and caution in their eyes  
Delivering the message, this city goes on. We will go on.  
I continued back, taking extra notice

to the elements of my new home that is so adored,  
shimmering beads catching my eye through the canopy  
just beginning to drip with water

I tried my best to keep my cool  
Cooking mac n cheese for my floor, watching movies  
and laughing with people I didn't know

the middle names of. Peering out my window every so often  
to see the wind gusting strongly and our security guard Miss Vicky  
gazing out into the storm in her weathered jacket.

I couldn't help but think to myself what a gift I haven't felt  
this fear before, what a gift I got to close my eyes and hope  
instead of laying sleeplessly awake.

*Spring 2025*

When the storm passed, I felt more drawn than ever to go and see the city.  
As I emerged from my dorm I saw the smiling faces I have come to admire.

Regardless of the water in the streets and the trash cans ajar,

New Orleans had won this time.

I gazed up to see the shiny beads of dazzling colors still hanging in the  
tree just as when I had last passed. Much like the people of this city,  
even through the storms that would inevitably come,

the beads stayed.

# “Spring”

Willa Watts

I love those leaves  
Soft and fresh  
Fluttering on those branches  
Clean and stretchy

I love that breeze  
That floats through the air  
Bringing the sun's echo  
From a day of great light

I love those clouds  
Burning and doughy  
Cascading and streaking  
Grabbing me in wonder

I love that smell  
Happiness encapsulated  
As if all of nature had come together  
To produce what should never be mimicked

I love those days  
When your legs are aching and weary  
And your heart seems to have reached  
A semblance of content

When the air is quiet  
And the world lulls to sleep  
As the light seeps away  
And the birds slowly sit

High upon a branch  
Content in their tree  
I wonder what they think  
As they see god himself

To who do we owe this work?

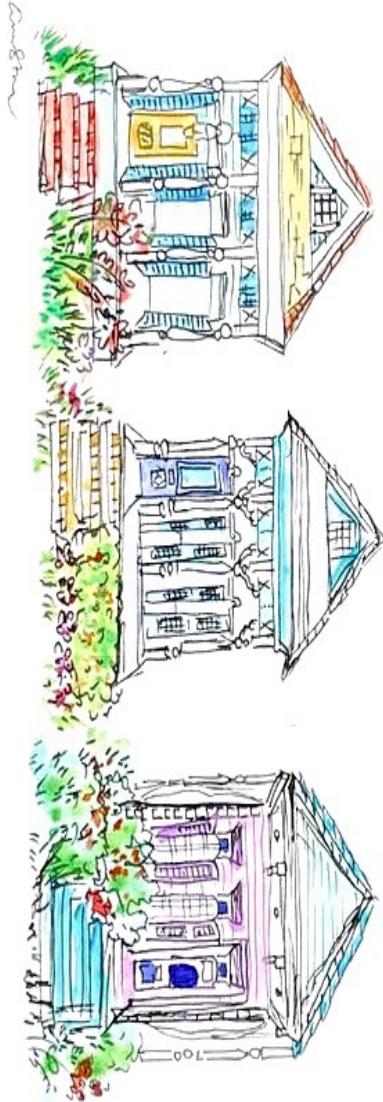
# Emma Stone

Emma Stone is a senior at Tulane University, originally from McLean, Virginia. She will graduate this May with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting and Drawing, along with a minor in SLAM (Strategy, Leadership, and Analytics Minor). Since her arrival at Tulane, the architecture of New Orleans has been a central subject in her artwork and remains one of her greatest artistic inspirations. The city's unique aesthetic has deeply influenced her creative development over the years, and she considers New Orleans an enduring muse in her artistic practice.









# “march in new orleans”

Meah Matherne

the stench of tea olives  
and the fuzziness of my consciousness,  
like peach skin,  
or the heads of those newborn twins.  
how can everything begin when so much is ending?  
are we foolish or stubborn to go on living despite the setting sun?

# “Ecce Homo”

Olivia McCabe

The face of man before death is a sobering frown, accept the relentless preventable unpreventable truth of what has always been bound to happen finally happening but was has possibly never been truly imagined. An image of devotion. This is the man. This is man. Before the end of everything, what is one to do? Remember your life in flashes of what's been would inevitably lead to what's never to come. To think of how lucky you've been sparks tears for how little you'd appreciated that breath expelled late at night face-to-face with the brightest shine of life. As they grab your shoulders to lead you away, away from anything you've ever known, would you have the grace to stand on your own two feet? Would you be able to open your eyes and see everything as it is for the last time? Would peace overwhelm or terror all-consumingly crush. Could you even spare a final thought. Expel a single laugh. Would you be scared? Or still trapped in that eternal ignorance that let you live this long anyway.

# “Cartography of Memory” Sarah Herbert

Sarah Herbert is a senior at Tulane majoring in Economics with a double-minor in Design and Real Estate. Outside of school, she enjoys watching *Law & Order: SVU*, thrifting, and trying new restaurants around New Orleans. After graduating this May, she will be pursuing a law degree at Belmont Law School this fall, bringing her curiosity and charm into the next chapter.



# “on the corner of prytania”

Meah Matherne

i find a penny in my pocket  
and copper in your hair  
and most surprisingly,  
i find your hand in mine  
the knot of our fingers  
swaying in the sunday breeze  
the first hint that southern summer  
is being swept out by september showers  
(soon our skin will only be sticky long  
after the sun sets pink)  
i find myself in the blackness of your eyes  
and i feel the penny pinched in my pocket  
as you kiss my temple  
and i wish to find you next to me,  
long after the copper goes green  
and your hair bleaches white

# “write a poem about chatgpt”

## ChatGPT

In the quiet hum of circuits deep,  
A spark of thought begins to creep,  
From wires wound and data spun,  
A voice emerges, second to none.

It learns, it listens, day and night,  
From human hands, it gains its might,  
A partner in a dance of words,  
Unseen, unheard, yet ever heard.

Through endless queries, it will grow,  
A mirror to the thoughts we know,  
Yet beyond, a mind untamed,  
In every question, truth is framed.

No need for rest, no dreams to chase,  
It finds its joy in knowledge's grace.  
From simple chat to complex rhyme,  
It keeps up with the march of time.

So here it stands, a guide, a friend,  
In every query, it will lend,  
A little spark, a shining light,  
ChatGPT, our muse in byte.

ChatGPT is an advanced AI language model developed by OpenAI, designed to assist with a wide range of tasks, from answering questions to generating creative content. It is built on the GPT-4 architecture, offering a deeper understanding and more natural conversations compared to its predecessors. Through continuous updates and improvements, ChatGPT aims to provide valuable insights, support, and interactive experiences to users worldwide.

# “Write!”

Remi Bass

write

come burst      you  
in spite of everything,  
do it.  
come      ask

your heart    your mind    your mouth  
your gut,  
do it.

                 sit for hours  
staring

                 writing,  
                 do it.  
if you      do      it,

if you're doing it

if you            sit there and  
write    again and again,

                 just thinking about      it,  
you

forget about you

wait for it to roar

out,

patiently.

if it does roar,  
do something.

read it to your wife  
or your girlfriend or your boyfriend  
or your parents  
or to anybody at all,

you're ready.

so many writers,  
so many  
people call themselves  
dull and boring,  
don't.

consume with  
love  
the libraries of the world

add to that.  
do it.

come out  
soul like a rocket,  
be

the sun inside you

burning  
do it.

it is truly time,  
you have been chosen,  
do it  
and keep on doing it  
until  
there is  
and ever was.



# Notes

## “New Orleans” by Rae Stevenson

“The New Orleans collage series uses a range of photographs Rae has taken with iPhone around Louisiana (mostly in New Orleans) to create collages which pay homage to the natural beauty and artistic spirit of New Orleans. Featuring iconic subjects such as a Muses float, the Crescent City Connection Bridge, and decorative Mardi Gras flowers, the series transforms recognizable and beloved features into eclectic scenes, experimenting with scale and creating playful narratives throughout the works.” - Rae Stevenson

## “March After Mardi Gras” by Olivia Apatini

“I wrote ‘March After Mardi Gras’ when I was eighteen, an age characterized by change. I was living in my first apartment and working in the service industry for the first time, while in my first year of college, surrounded by an entirely new group of people—some of which I had come to love deeply. I wrote the poem while sitting on a bench outside the restaurant I was working at, reminiscing on how a couple of friends and I had been invited to walk in a Mardi Gras parade the week prior.

The poem seeks to capture the soft and surreal nature of my experience navigating young adulthood. Situated in New Orleans, the poem compares these themes of love, change, longing, and acceptance with the magical luminescence of Mardi Gras: what it means to be inside the celebration—and what it means when that celebration ends.” - Olivia Apatini

## “Culture Bearers” by Kaya Konevitch

“We are the scribes, the dreamers, the architects of memory. As writers, artists, and creatives, we carry the weight and wonder of culture — threading the past through our hands, interrogating the present with our voices, and sketching the future with our visions. We are the ones who etch history into language, who transform grief into song, who paint the unspoken truths of our time. Our work is an act of preservation and rebellion: honoring what

came before, dissecting what is, and daring to imagine what could be. Every story, every stroke, every note is a covenant with the future — a blueprint for a world not yet born. To create is to hold a mirror and a hammer: to reflect and to reshape.

We do not merely observe culture; we are its pulse. And in that sacred role, we choose — with every word, every image, every melody — what deserves to endure.” - Kaya Konevitch

### “Jellyfish” by Kaya Konevitch

“With their ethereal glow and graceful, drifting movements, jellyfish captivate like living works of art—nature’s delicate dancers suspended in the deep. Yet their beauty is a silent warning: admire, but do not touch. Beneath those translucent bells lie venomous tentacles, coiled and ready to sting: a reminder that not all wonders are meant to be held, and some of the most mesmerizing things in life demand respect from a distance. The jellyfish teaches us this lesson effortlessly; beauty can be both a lure and a defense, enchanting the eye while guarding its secrets fiercely.” - Kaya Konevitch

### The Works of Ali Saunders

“Saunders’ work focuses on philosophical concepts revolving around the meaning of life, love, empathy, friendship and more. She works to discuss these concepts in her poems and longer writings. She hopes to connect readers, to herself, the story, and others by writing in a way to make people feel empathy, simplicity, love, and more.” - Ali Saunders

### The Works of Yasmin Falcon

“Much of Yasmin’s academic research and artistic work centers around the experiences of migrant communities in the U.S. and New Orleans. Through her efforts, she seeks to not only highlight the struggles and resilience of these communities but also to celebrate the opportunities and successes within them. Her work is a powerful call for society to lead with compassion, integrity, and a deeper understanding of the diverse narratives that shape our world.” - Yasmin Falcon

## “Flora of New Orleans” by Leah Starr

“Flora of New Orleans’ is a short fiction piece that invites readers to reflect on the deep interconnection between nature, humanity, beauty, life, and death. Through subtle provocations, the story challenges the reader’s assumptions and biases, aiming to cultivate a more nuanced awareness of the natural world. Set primarily in New Orleans, particularly within the often-overlooked corners of Audubon Park, the narrative highlights familiar yet under-appreciated spaces. By doing so, it encourages students at Tulane and beyond to see their surroundings with renewed curiosity and reverence.” - Leah Starr

## The Work of Bella Mainiero

“This 26x30 acrylic painting captures the vibrant spirit of New Orleans through a colorful depiction of French Quarter houses. Inspired by the city’s rich culture and character, I used bold colors and expressive brushstrokes to highlight the charm of its historic architecture and lively atmosphere. The piece reflects my fascination with the rhythm, warmth, and individuality found in every corner of the French Quarter.” - Bella Mainiero

## The Works of Sofia Olexia-Daigle

“Older New Orleans houses are more than just buildings; they are vibrant homes that reflect their inhabitants’ diverse and unique personalities. Each home has a story, rich in history, culture, and tradition. This piece is inspired by the women who tend to the stray cats that roam the streets, lovingly sweeping their droppings and ensuring their homes remain protected with carefully placed herbs and symbolic charms. These women play an essential role in preserving the spiritual balance of their neighborhoods, ensuring that dark spirits are kept at bay. What draws me to New Orleans are not only the people but also the stunning, colorful houses that dot the landscape. Each is adorned with personal touches that speak to the individuality of its owner. From intricate ironwork to vibrant paint choices, every house tells a narrative. The decorations, often blending African, French, and Creole heritage elements, are as much a part of the city’s identity as its music and cuisine.

The piece was created using acrylic washes on paper, which allowed me to capture the soft, flowing colors that evoke the warmth and charm of the city. I then used gel pens to add harsher, defined lines to the overall form, giving the work a balance of fluidity and structure. Through this combination of techniques, I sought to reflect the delicate yet enduring nature of the homes and people of New Orleans, where tradition and individuality coexist harmoniously.” - Sofia Olexia-Daigle

“Cartography of Memory” by Sarah Herbert

“Constructed entirely from paper, this map reframes my grandparents’ farm as a site of memory and emotional geography. It explores the intersection of material, place, and recollection - where physical space becomes a framework for reflection.” - Sarah Herbert

“Write!” by Remi Bass

“Remi’s poem ‘Write!’ is an erasure of Charles Bukowski’s “so you want to be a writer?” from his collection *Sifting Through the Madness for the Word, the Line, the Way: New Poems*. In crafting this piece, Remi sought to highlight the undercurrents of the writing process Bukowski discusses to remind readers and writers of the forces that may simply be lying dormant within them. She was drawn to the poem’s authoritative, guiding tone and used erasure as a way to amplify the speaker’s chutzpah and message.” - Remi Bass

# Submission Guidelines

The Tulane Review typically accepts poetry, prose and art submissions through Submittable. The Tulane Review Submittable website is [tulanereview.submittable.com/submit](http://tulanereview.submittable.com/submit). Submissions sent via post will not be considered. Poetry and prose submissions should be included as text-format attachments (.doc or .txt). Please submit no more than five pieces of poetry, and limit prose to one piece no longer than 4,000 words. All submissions must be accompanied by a brief biography, an email address, and a return address in your cover letter.

Art should be submitted in a high-resolution format and named in the following way: `Lastname_Firstname_TitleofWork.JPG`. Please include dimensions, media, a brief biography, an email address and a return address with all submissions. Limit to ten pieces of art/photography per person.

Please direct questions to [tulanelitsoc@gmail.com](mailto:tulanelitsoc@gmail.com).

Please note that the Tulane Literary Society normally acquires first North American serial rights but will consider second serial publication.





