

# WITHIN TENSIONS



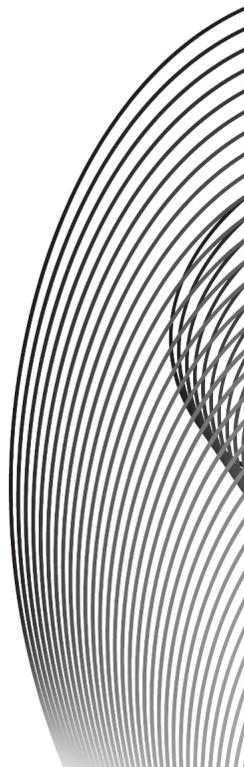
vol.22

MACABRE





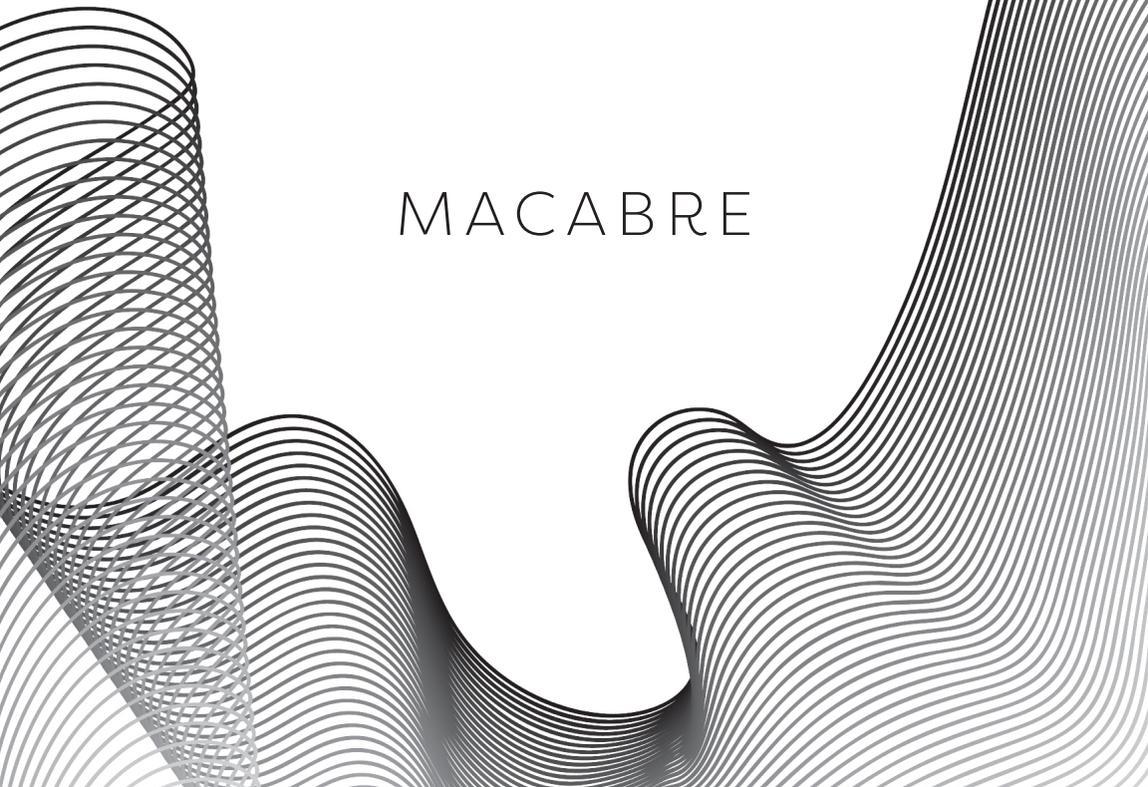
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October 2021  
vol. 22

MACABRE



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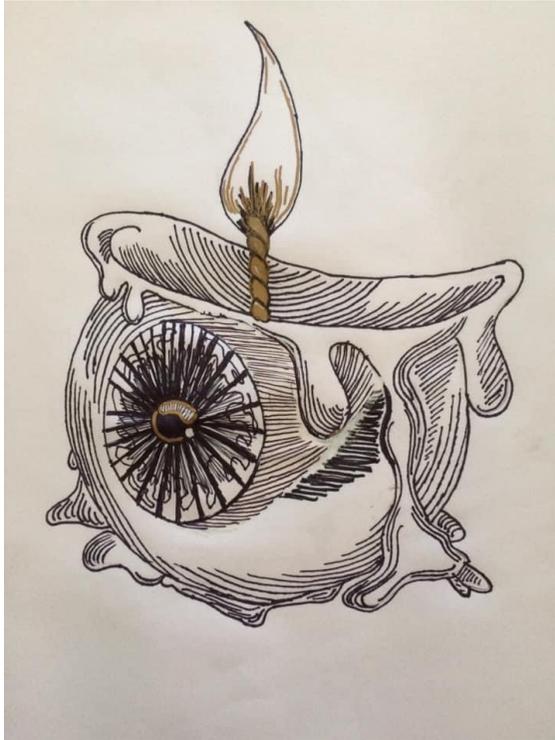
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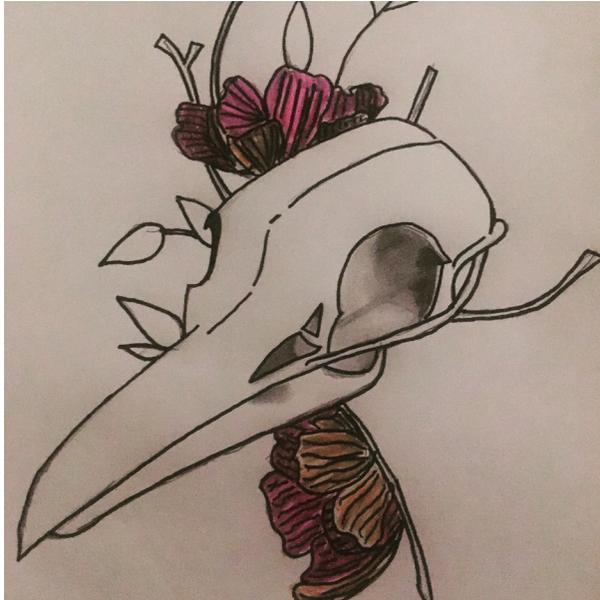
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We at Withintensions want to acknowledge that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), and Səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) peoples. We want to recognize that these lands belong to the Indigenous peoples who have lived here far before the arrival of settlers. We also want to push beyond land acknowledgements to further encourage acts of reconciliation. Recognition is great but it is nowhere near where we need to be. Reconciliation is comprehensive and takes more than an acknowledgment for occupying land. We always support marginalised peoples right to protest.



“Even in death there is beauty”

## Felisha Nauffts Savard



“We are all bonded in some way, to a person, to a memory, to a promise and we need ways to always see it through even with impending death.”



“When we die our memories continue to live on regardless of our physical selves. As the eye melts, it shows a person's acceptance of the loss”

## A Changed State (2021)

Camilo Bustos

I wanted to reflect the  
process of change; even  
after life we become  
another thing. Ironically,  
we'll become a part of life.



View the full video  
[here](#)

## Calaveras (2021)

Francisco Berlanga

Why are white people so afraid of egg whites? When making these sugar skulls, I began by looking for recipes for the sugar mixture and for royal icing. Each recipe I encountered seemed to be made by someone “inspired by the fun traditions of Mexican Halloween” and talked endlessly about how cute these little skulls are for decoration. Perhaps most disconcerting about these recipes was the presence of meringue powder -cornstarch, dried egg whites, sugar, citric acid, and some stabilizers- as a substitute for beaten egg whites. I didn't even know meringue powder was a thing, let alone did I have any on hand. I remember talking about these recipes with my family; as far as I could recall, we always used egg whites, cracked fresh, and separated the yolk using the shell. Perhaps meringue powder is just more convenient. Perhaps people don't trust egg whites anymore. Perhaps this was just one more divorce from Mexico. Ultimately, I don't think I trusted any of these recipes, my grandmother remarked that I just needed egg

whites and lemon juice, so I just went for it. Feeling the sugar mixture, similar to wet sand, and adjusting the ingredients as needed. The process was slow to say the least as the sand castles of sugar kept collapsing on themselves. Eventually I reached a happy texture, an almost stable pile of sugar, I let them dry and decorated them the next day.

I think that it's a shame that these recipes have sold the idea that the sugar skull is for halloween. If someone were to make these and then throw them out after halloween then the skulls would have been only 2 days off from what they were meant to be. But I guess devoid of their context they can't truly do what they were meant to. Separate from All Souls Day (Dia de los Muertos) the skulls seem soulless, the skulls wandering without aim are bodies unclaimed. They are not ornaments; they are evidence, indicators of something much scarier than egg whites.

















## Cheeks and Teeth (2021)

Beaded embroidery

Cassandra Yu

Guttural feeling, body dysphoria,  
quarantine depression,  
Restitched and entwined into  
archivable treasures.



## Passage Between (2021)

Analog collage on paper

Dominique Norville

This work reflects the tension between the states of being we understand as life, and death. We see familiar symbols of death such as the black horse and carriage, the river to the underworld, the gravestones, the heavens, the earth. But is the woman being pushed into the ground, or rising from it? Is the skeleton figure welcoming us to the gravestone, or breaking free from it? The autumn is apparently the time of year where the veil between the living and the dead is the thinnest. Some may find this frightening. It can also be comforting. Let us embrace the macabre and open that curtain.



## Glimmers (2020)

graphite on archival paper

Erin Shadoff

I made this drawing last year during the height of the pandemic. I had been researching the Hidden Mothers photography from the Victorian era and was drawn to the concealment of the life source of the nameless children. The mothers were covered in a length of fabric so that the children would feel comfortable enough to sit for the photograph, while still obtaining a portrait of the child. The result is an eerie atmosphere with a ghostly figure and the cameras at the time generated a very shadowy image; all of which correlates with the way I approach making my own work.

I wanted to create my own hidden mother image, where the mother is the focal point. I feel that this piece works well with the call for macabre because it slides between feeling sinister and protective. Is she cradling the infant or about to tear it apart?



# The Past is a mutilation of the Self (2021)

Opal Mclean

I had an epiphany recently that led to the death of someone very dear to me. No, not a murder. Not a tragic passing. It was the death of my past self. Something that has happened before and I know will happen again, and again, and again until I am at a point in my life where I just know.

Maybe that point will never even come but I realize it doesn't have to. You can be different versions of yourself all at once. That is what makes a person.

An identity is not one simple thing to be quantified. It is built with experience and cured with time. We spend an entire lifetime developing these identities only for them to become irrelevant the next day.

I have been struggling with my own identity. Something that I haven't done since I was a teenager. Maybe I just didn't let myself struggle with it.

I spent a long time living in the shadows out of insecurity and self doubt. It wasn't until I started growing up that I figured out that I could be whoever I wanted to be.

I didn't want to live in the shadows. I wanted to be in the light. I wanted to be known and loved. I wanted to be someone who was worth time and energy.

I was for a very long time. I built this persona that I thought was worth it. Sometimes I miss her and sometimes I fucking hate her for getting me to this place.

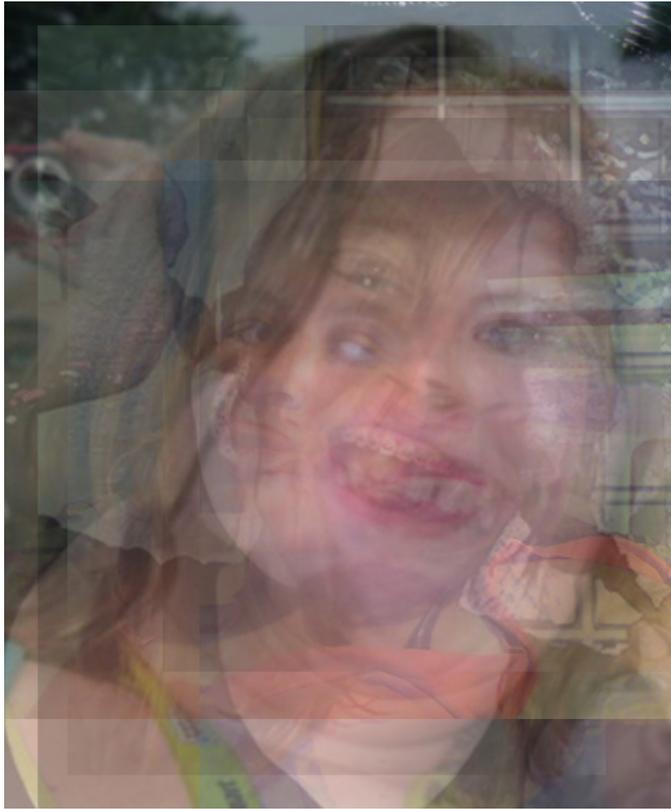
She was a stepping stone. A stage. A platform for me to figure out who I am.

It's different from who I want to be. In an ideal world, there would be a curation process of identities.

but there isn't and there never will be. We have to just keep on living and keep on being until one identity has formed. Maybe that is what happens after death.

Maybe no one ever really knows who we are once we are gone.

That's why I just have to be.  
In every sense of the word.



“the Past is a mutilation of the Self” is a portrait created from selfies taken over 10 years of the artist’s life. Through the layering of images, there is not a reveal of identity but rather a mutilation. The past does not come together to reveal the artist’s face but it actually comes together to cloud the present image. This project is a way for the artist to let go of the many characters her past self has been enacting. Her true self does not come from a captured image but rather the moments that do not need to be stitched together.

## Dorian's Final Hymn

### Memoirs of a Mustache

There will be a remembrance of trembling  
The first time he saw those eyes locked in a coffin  
Smoke and mirrors filled the atmosphere  
To enhance a silhouette that was lurking behind those  
eyes

Writing in a trance'd out existence  
As The Beast  
As The Monster  
As The New Identity  
Took his hand inside of its own

He wrote the blistering verse  
The profound prose that now is walking among you all  
Yet you still don't realize

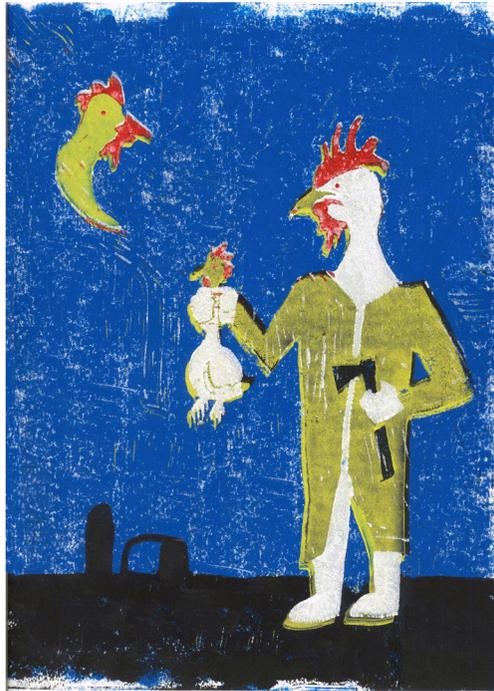
It wasn't he who wrote those dark and enticing sonnets  
That lured the young to their death

The old to their graves  
And himself into that frame  
Now locked behind a satin door  
As they watched it all circle the drain and disappeared  
into the dark abyss  
One last slash of the silver blade and all will stop  
There shall be no more resemblance

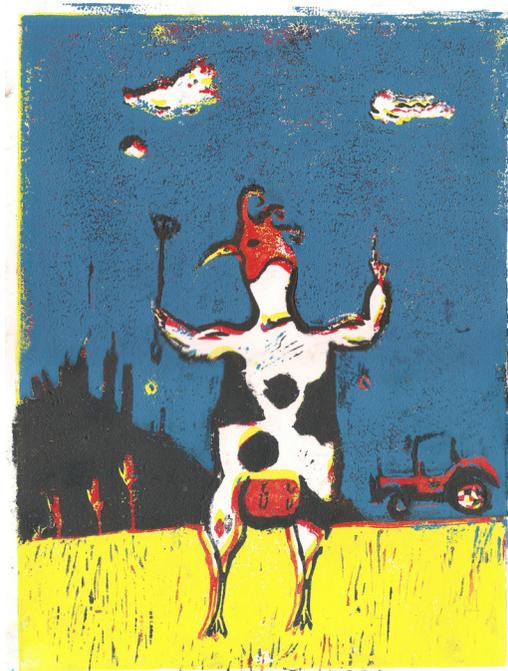
No residue of the life that was  
Not even the framed portrait will show what life was lived  
No verse written by the monster shall be remembered  
The graves shall be unmarked and barren  
Just as the soul that was haunted by the framed eyes  
Will forever be lost in 6 feet of blanket  
Buried in a cold cell  
Locked behind dead eyes

## Nick Noble

These pieces are a commentary on human relationships with our food, and the unnatural disconnect that supply chains and factory farming create between livestock and consumers.



*Brothers* (2020) linoleum reduction print on paper.



*Factory Floyd* (2013) linoleum reduction  
print on paper.

## Self Portrait II (2021)

Natalie Chan

This piece is a continued exploration from a painting from a self-portrait series I did in 2018. There were three paintings in that series, but one was particularly personal to me: an abstracted portrait on wood panel was captured with coarse brushstrokes and emphasized by the grain of the wood, the roughage highlighted in the violent marks I left behind by directly scratching against the board with my nails. This was around the first time in my art practice when I began to draw from my personal life and exposed my vulnerabilities through the work I created. My portrait lacked distinctive features as they blurred together and pulled in the directions the scratches were carved in; the painting bore the obsessive compulsion to scratch away at my eczema inflicted skin, the need to pick away at the imperfection and eradicate the itching.

Though my skin condition has not ceased since then, the recent cold, dry weather has certainly contributed to its inflammation, my patches are exacerbated most viciously under the weight of stress - my mental state embodied through the wounds of my skin. In a recent frenzy of scratching, my nails left my skin bloodied and scarred, and I thought to re-explore the violent self-portrait I undertook years ago. I took inspiration from Lucio Fontana's Spatial Concept 'Waiting' (190) and Spatial Concept (1962) from his Tagli series; his work struck the balance between destruction and creation through the primordial slashing gesture. My work is a primal release of frustration, a piece to be aged and re-stitched together, one day, in the future.





# How's Life Going?(2021)

Sasha Cerino

I wouldn't adorn myself as someone from gen Z if I didn't throw my two cents into the massive blackhole that is existential memes. The many examples such as the light hearted "I wanna die" comment after any minor inconvenience happens or the copious amounts of posts about spiralling into depression followed by a photo taken out of context, but perfectly encapsulating that dread. This is part of the current internet culture and because it's so easily accessible to the majority of youth and young adults today; we've come to the conclusion that this feeling is a shared experience. That we all feel this way at some point and have a laugh at it because of it's relatability. The concept of humour being used on heavy themes such as death isn't new, but the medium it takes on and the lens we view it in is different. With the awareness of mental health rising, so too shall how we cope with mental illness. However, I do wonder if the overexposure to these memes leads us to become numb, or possibly trigger a spiral after the fact, ultimately leading us to our downfall. How very macabre would that be?

# HOW'S LIFE GOING?



## Untitled (2021)

Victoria Mulja

Butterflies are a common representation of change, hope, and spiritual rebirth. In addition, they also have a short life span, which mirrors the concept that life is too short. The skull breaking apart into these beautiful butterflies is a reminder that while our loved ones are gone, their spirit lives on in a form of something that represents life.



## Roadkill (2021)

Walter Segers

I explore issues surrounding identity, immigration, belonging, existence and demise

Inspiration for my work often arises from my curiosity around the interaction between humans, animals, objects and locations. I am drawn to work that is layered, visually and conceptually, and is capable of communicating multiple stories simultaneously depending on the life experience of the viewer.

Roadkill combines multiple images using repetition. I record a location as a background and, through animals 'accidentally' performing in front of the camera, their interruption disputes the idea that there is a sense of order in our lives, and that being in the same place with someone else does not mean connectivity. Macabre subjects appear in my portraits and still life photographs; they are part of our existence.



Francisco  
Berlanga



## Meet the Team

We write with intention & dwell within tensions. We are artists who have been left without an aim for how to continue engaging with art in the absence of institution. Our goal is to provide a place where we can write about new ideas, old ideas, and bad ideas. We are by no means professional writers, we inhabit a place between the seriousness of academic writing and the frivolity of passing thought. We will often succumb to cliches and trends as they pass us as we all often must.

We hope to present unique thoughts for you to consider. Our writing speaks for no one but ourselves. We do not reduce the similar experiences of others to what we have experienced. We invite you to critically engage with the content, to challenge and be challenged, to test the tensions in question.

Francisco Berlanga is a contemporary artist who studied at Simon Fraser University. He obtained his BFA in Visual Arts with a minor in Interactive Arts and Technology. His practice is based on questioning identity, particularly his connection with his own Mexican culture and how one can inhabit a culture while being partially absent from it. He engages in discourses with his own identity through the creation of traditional Mexican “manualidades” or crafts, his work makes connections between traditional Mexican aesthetics and contemporary visual language. His practice engages with concepts of inaccessibility and the role memory and language can play when someone is distanced from their own culture. He attempts to bridge the gaps between his personal and cultural identities by forcing connections between them and by trying to understand the limitations that these identities impose upon each other.



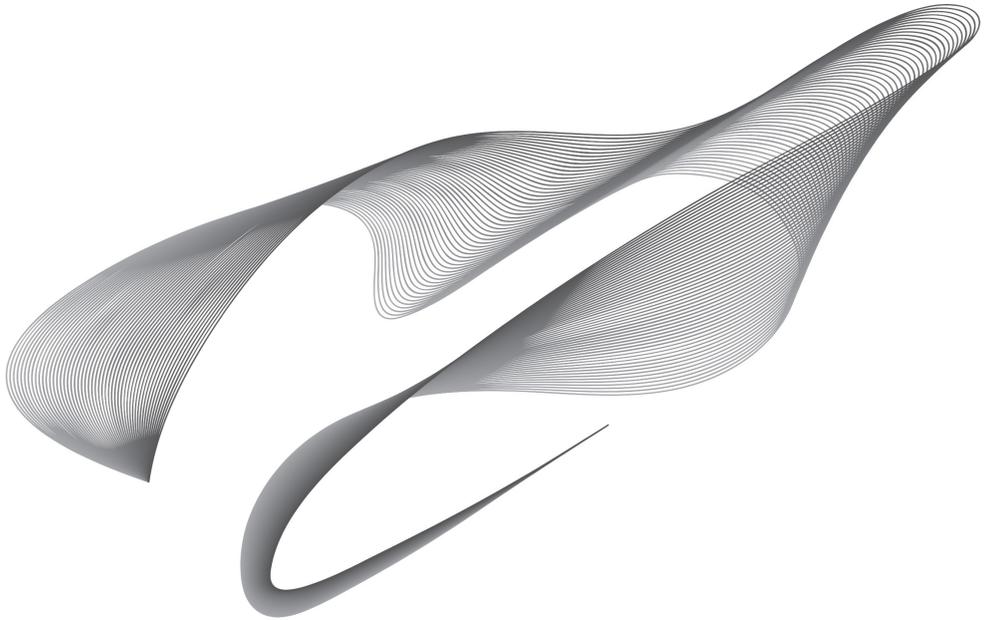
Natalie  
Chan

Natalie Chan recently completed her BFA in Visual Arts at Simon Fraser University. Her practice often focuses on the relational aspects of people & places, as well as the inner turmoils & complexities of the human condition. In the creation of her works, she aims to highlight the ideas of reflection, healing, and reconciliation as tangible possibilities in each encounter. Her latest interests include learning how to tattoo, in understanding both the technical skills & intimate relation between artist and the livelihood of their canvas.



Opal  
Mclean

Mclean is best described as the “selfish artist” meaning her practice entirely revolves around herself. Her work often relates back to a mental psyche that cannot be described by words alone. Instead, it can be described by an action. A reference to a state of being or a performance that lends to the way her brain functions. This manifestation and documentation of different processes becomes her tool to relate to the outside world. Her own existence comes into question in a way that so many experience in their own daily life. This experience becomes a social, cultural, and political connection to her projects. Her work becomes both alienating but connecting in a shared experience that translates through different media.



We put out new issues every month with a different topic.

We are always looking for submissions and opportunities to collaborate so check out our social medias.

on instagram:  
@withintensions

or email us at:  
within.tensions@gmail.com

If you want more information, feel free to contact us.

Our next issue will be on the topic of “Filters“ and submissions are now open.

See you next month!

## Acknowledgements

Withintensions would not have been possible without the works of Francisco Berlanga, Camilo Bustos, Sasha Cerino, Natalie Chan, Opal Mclean, Memoirs of a Moustache, Victoria Mulja, Nick Noble, Dominique Norville, Felisha Nauffts Savard, Walter Segers, Erin Shadoff, and Cassandra Yu

We would also like to thank Francisco Berlanga for his design and social media contributions, Natalie Chan for her assistance in coordinating and Opal Mclean for her editorial work.

We are excited to share our future works with you and we hope to provide more opportunities for artists alike.

