

Fishladder: A Student Journal of Art and Writing

Volume 14
Issue 1 4/01/2016

Article 13

2016

In Your Hands

Sydney McCann
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/fishladder>

Recommended Citation

McCann, Sydney (2016) "In Your Hands," *Fishladder: A Student Journal of Art and Writing*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1, Article 13.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/fishladder/vol14/iss1/13>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fishladder: A Student Journal of Art and Writing by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Sydney McCann

In Your Hands

There's a certain feeling that comes when you're driving down the interstate and see Chicago Skyway Toll Bridge in big red letters, glowing in neon, announcing that you've officially arrived. In the distance you see the lights of the city, silhouettes of skyscrapers, structures that once only existed in someone's imagination but then were brought to life in someone's hands. It's unlike anything that has ever been thought of in your small hometown in Michigan. You might as well have entered a different world entirely.

You have two days away from your normal life, away from everyone telling you that you'll never make it as a writer, that you should be a doctor, or an accountant, or a lawyer because you have to make a living for yourself, that you need to "be realistic." You have 48 hours to stay with your graphic designer friend that you've known since childhood. You spend the night in her tiny apartment with a hammock instead of a couch in the middle of the hard wood floor. She has put up photographs on the walls—her work, of course—and you wish that you would have thought to put art on the walls in your own apartment. She makes you spinach and mushroom quiche, from scratch, and sets out a plate of chocolate chip cookies and espresso biscotti arranged on a plate with strawberries, like something you'd see in a food magazine. She pours you a glass of Sauvignon Blanc and you talk together for hours about the next design project she has planned—a collaboration of her photography and the stories of the people she photographs, written as poetry. She explains how she wants to help tell everyone's story, how people connect and are brought together by shared experience, and you feel inspired to be more reflective and creative like her. You wish that everyone could be as fueled by passion as she is.

The next morning she takes you around the city and you look at the world through the lens of her camera, seeing the intricate details in the architecture of the walls of her design school. She shows you all of her favorite haunts, little shops with exquisite tiled floors that she likes to take pictures of. She brings you to a Swedish restaurant and you eat paper-thin pancakes and fresh fruit, and you drink coffee with cream and sugar and it all tastes like possibility. That night she takes you to Wrigleyville and you go to the bar where you drink long island

iced teas and you dance and sing along with every song until your voice goes hoarse and you throw your hands in the air in time to match the strobe lights and for the first time in a long time you feel alive. Then suddenly it's 3 A.M. and you're stumbling down the snowy streets arm in arm back to the subway station, so high on life you can't feel the cold and you think maybe if you lived here things could be different. Maybe you, and your dreams, could thrive here.

Maybe you could actually make it as an artist, as a writer. Maybe if you lived here, in a place where inspiration can be found even in building walls and breakfast foods, where people actually believe in dreams, maybe you could join all the other aspiring artists who are trying to make something of themselves in their tiny apartments with hammocks instead of couches. You could be the one making something out of nothing, making things with your hands.

The next day you drive home and watch as the skyline shrinks in the rearview mirror, but it grows in your mind. You think about the people who first dreamed up the idea of Chicago, who took that idea and then built it from the ground up, creating the city that is now so famous around the world. You wonder if maybe those artists were ever told that it would never work, that they needed to "be realistic," and you laugh because you realize they were—they took an idea and literally made it real. You feel a new determination rise up within you, a resolve to pursue your writing no matter what the people in Michigan tell you. You may be leaving the city, but you are taking a piece of it with you—one of your friend's photographs. She has taken your picture on the promise that you will write a poem and be the first "story" featured in her new project. As the city disappears behind you, silently you promise yourself that one day you will move to Chicago.