

FREE!

#3

the philadelphia  
citywide



# SENSE



## From the editors:

Thank you for picking up this edition of the Philadelphia Citywide! We build our zine from submissions, and we like to establish a theme to foster dialogue and encourage fresh ideas. This time, we landed on the theme "sense" to anchor submissions. It just felt right for the moment.

The word has its root in the Latin "sentire," which means "to feel." When attending to our sense(s), we honor our ability as humans to process and connect with the world around us, in each of our idiosyncratic ways. In times of local and global unrest, we believe it's especially important to tend to how we feel, as individuals and as a collective.

Here are some of our thoughts on the topic:

Due to my inability to control anything, my consolation comes from my body's talent for feeling. I breathe everything in and it all gets vacuumed up into my lungs and I am sooo pleased to be alive, despite the pain. Glad to be here, to have tasted blackberries and the burnt sugar residue of mid whiskey and to have kissed an assortment of mostly hot people. Happy for walking through a humid night but smelling so much honeysuckle it was all I could focus on. Thankful for every Cure song and yes even the Wild Mood Swings stuff. Every cat I ever pet, every rat that sat on my shoulder, every mouse who curled her tail around my finger to feel safer in my palm was a gift. Everyone gets a different kind of embodiment experience and my body seems to do the best it can. I have bad eyes and tinnitus but I FEEL SO MUCH and it keeps me here, happy to be here with you all, at all.

—Lauren/moonprism

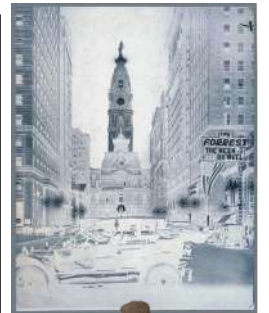


As it becomes increasingly challenging to disengage from technology, making the effort to engage with our IRL surroundings is an important form of active resistance. Relying on our senses can keep us grounded and in touch with our needs and our community's, and it can build resilience.

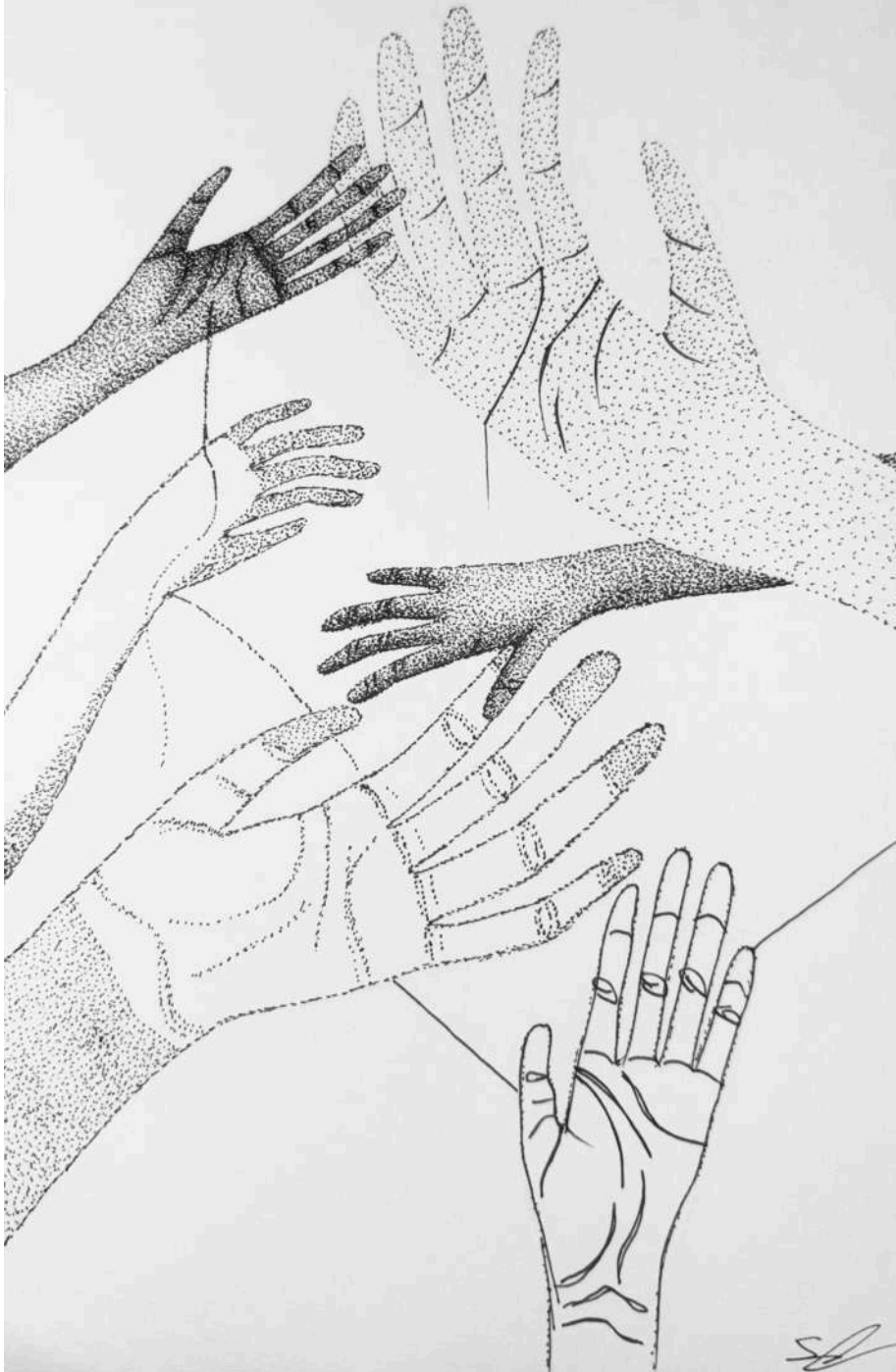
Humor, I believe, is the sixth sense. Comedian Larry Charles recently said in an interview that one of the greatest things about comedy is how it can combat fear. We can use humor to fight hatred, to connect across cultural boundaries, to better understand each other. A good joke opens a window into the joker's inner world; to have a sense of humor is to possess the ability to empathize.

AI intrinsically lacks a genuine sense of humor: it operates by replicating patterns from data and can never genuinely "get" a joke in the real way that we can, a way that transcends the sum of its parts and requires the capacity for empathy. We can use humor to continue to engage with people across difference, and we can also use it to evade some of the tricky "tools" that purport to know more about us than we do ourselves. In a time when a humorless tech oligarchy wants to buy out space in our brains, we possess this cool, powerful, and unbreakable weapon. Hope something in these pages makes you laugh. —Amelia

I just read a book about ecology. In it the author argued that the concept of the human individual is bogus. They said that instead we're defined into existence by our relationships - not just to each other, but to what they call "the more-than-human world" - animals, plants, fungi, bacteria. I've been thinking about humans as a colony organism like Pando, for better or worse. Sometimes I feel kind of isolated and wish I was a herring, cruising through the ocean with 300 of my closest friends. There must be loads of other people out there chasing a sense of belonging. That's been one of my favorite things about starting this project - the sense of community and belonging that came with it. Feels great to be a part of something, you know? Nothing on this earth beats making art with your friends. —Larissa



*Vocal Chords* BY SARAH IANNUCCI



# Hot Books For Summer Fun In The Sun Shine Activities

BY NAME HERE

**W**ow, summer is the Friday of the year! You will enjoy sitting by the pool, beach trips, and going to Best Ice Cream South Jersey. Read our Best Books Summer Reading List 2025 to learn what books to read while enjoying the sunshine!



## **“Normal Friends,” Sally Rooney**

In a wet town in Ireland, two sad thin women get steamy and spicy! You won't want to miss the upcoming film adaptation with Louis as the love interest! Popcorn, please!

## **“All the Tiny Beautiful Stars,” Colleen Hoover**

Make sure you have KLEENEX 30 CT FACIAL TISSUE 30 CT OVERNIGHT SHIPPING on hand for this tear jerker! The story of a daughter who encounters her mother and that night thirty years ago when generational trauma.

## **“Decision Points,” Malcolm Gladwell**

The most urgent book of the present times we're in, Gladwell uses his Harvard educated brain to make great facts that will have you coming back for more! You can see many productivity hacks here.

## **“A Court of Ash and Wonder,” Sarah J. Maas**

#Booktok! The next book in the ACOTAR series is here, so have your friends over for wine and don't tell your husbands! This book focuses on Horfo and Brestaleigh's escape from the Night Castle. Definitely Mormon writer, mama!

## **“Army Island,” James Patterson**

Best gift for father in your life tie clip office golf set whiskey stone stone

# Savoring the Rain ☁

BY ELEANOR NABHOLZ

I grew up on the east coast of the United States, specifically the northeast, for the first 23 years of my life. Growing up in this region means living in a variety of weather throughout the year, some enjoyable, some not. Northeast weather can include experiences like freezing cold Halloweens, hurricanes shutting school down for a week, fake early springs, and rain ruining your beach plans. Upon graduating college on the east coast, I set my sights on somewhere entirely different, where I would trade the east coast weather for sunny skies, mild temperatures, and wildfires: Los Angeles, California.

At first, I thought I found paradise. My new apartment had a swimming pool with palm trees and hibiscus plants that looked straight out of a luxury resort. My closet began to fill up with sundresses, sandals and plenty of pairs of sunglasses. I filled my days with solo activities in the sunshine, exploring beaches and hiking trails. I searched around the city for the best food, devouring cultural staples my taste buds hadn't tried yet. However, over time I began to see cracks in my rose-colored glasses. Despite having pleasant weather and plenty of time, I struggled to find people to share it with. The pandemic hitting right when I was going to move meant it was hard to make friends, and I felt isolated and lonely. There were only so many times I could pretend I was happy sitting by the pool alone each weekend.

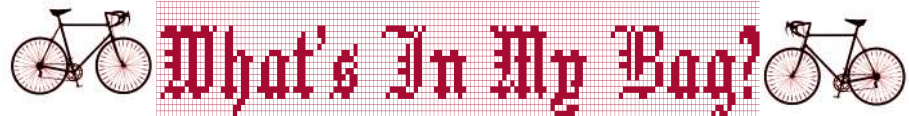
One day, I got my break in the form of a rainy forecast. That upcoming Saturday would be 76 degrees, high humidity, with rain showers all day. I thought back to a word of advice an Uber driver had told me a few days ago: "Whatever you do, avoid driving in the rain. People drive like idiots in the rain here." The Uber driver was right, as LA drivers are 80% more likely to crash in the rain than in any other weather. I decided I'd have a day to myself indoors, avoiding the treacherous freeways. After waking up at 11am, I rolled out of bed, opened the door on my balcony, and slowly breathed in the smell of the rain.

Its rhythmic sound hitting the concrete balcony calmed me, and I felt the pressure in my mind and body melt away. I no longer felt the pressure to explore my new city, to do something, anything. The rain beating down on the city gave me the permission to feel the sadness I had been pushing away for weeks. It was as if the beautiful weather had given me a cloak to hide my emotions underneath. With the clouds rolling in, I was left with myself, my ugly emotions, and the godforsaken "once in a lifetime" pandemic. I thought back to my rich social life on the east coast, and I felt hollow. I realized I missed my friends and family deeply, and I anxiously wondered when I would feel better here. With nothing left to do, I stayed in my apartment and felt sorry for myself as the rainshower went on. I can't say everything got better after that, but after that day I began to relish rainy days. They gave me an opportunity to drop the facade, to stay inside all day. The rain forced me to listen to my mind and body, and do what was best for myself—even if that meant going back to bed.



*This picture makes me think about the sense of touch - the cacti whisper to my intrusive thoughts of wanting to run my hands along them, but logic kicks in and tells me that I shouldn't do that. The wall behind the cacti looks very inviting and that would be safe to touch, but the cacti keep me from getting closer*

PHOTO AND WORDS BY EMILY NOLASCO-BARRIENTOS



# What's In My Bag?

## Packing Essentials For My Bike Commute

BY ANDE

**B**iking in Philly? Not sure what to pack? After 15 years of rolling around the city and countless blunders (not the least of which was cruising onto 676), I've assembled a list of basic supplies that's helped me weather many a mechanical mishap on my daily rides. Truthfully, there's nothing innovative about this kit—peruse any bike forum and you'll surely find something similar—and by no means is this a definitive list for all applications, all bikes, or all people. That said, these items have worked well for me, and maybe you'll find them useful, too!

Without further ado, here's what's in my bag...

### Spare tube(s)

Not surprisingly, the most common maintenance issue I experience on the road is flat tires. I have better fortune than some, but time comes for us all. While I've mended a tube against some storefront or a stranger's porch, I much prefer to carry a spare tube or two and save my patching for home.

### Tire levers (2)

A spare tube is great, but it's not much use if I can't get the old tube out. A set of plastic tire levers is the standard, and having tried some alternative approaches to tire removal, I'm not going to argue otherwise! If you're a real brute, you might be able to muscle the tire off with one lever, but they're often sold as a pair and are so compact... why not carry two?

### Tweezers

Before I put in my spare tube, I always check my tire for sharp objects. There are few things more discouraging during a flat fix than putting in a new tube only to immediately puncture it because there's still a pointy object lingering in your tire. Sometimes the culprit is something relatively large, like a nail or a piece of glass, and you can remove it carefully with your bare hands. But what I've learned biking in our fair city is that there is an even more loathsome foe than those aforementioned nuisances: fine, yet not less sharp, wire shed from worn car tires. What makes these wires so vexing is their near imperceptibility; they often evade an initial inspection of the tire, but if left unaddressed, they'll invariably puncture a replacement tube—sometimes immediately, sometimes slowly. The only way I can reliably remove these pesky intruders from tires is with tweezers, so they've become an indispensable part of my kit.

### Portable pump

The portable pump seems like an obvious inclusion—how do you expect to inflate your spare tube without one? That said, I've found myself in just that predicament, so on the list it goes!

### Dollar bill

Sometimes the object that punctures a tube doesn't just pierce the tire, it leaves a gash. An opening like this may be large enough that an inflated tube will hemorrhage through it and burst. Placing a folded dollar bill inside the tire between the cut and the tube can offer some protection, but I think of it as a short-term solution, and in some cases it may not work at all. Either way, time for a new tire. Just remember to grab that dollar bill before disposing of your old tire—the return's almost as good as a PFCU savings account!

### Patch kit—with fresh glue

I do carry a patch kit, but it's truly my last resort. I've found that the glue doesn't last very long once opened, so if I've used my kit on the road, I endeavor to get a new tube of glue for my next outing.

### Multi-tool

As the name suggests, it's one item that contains several tools—like a Swiss Army Knife for bikes. In most cases, a simple tool with a few Allen keys and a screwdriver will do, but you can also find more elaborate options with things like spoke wrenches and a chainbreaker. Most parts on my bike are secured with Allen-head bolts, so the Allen keys on my multi-tool enable me to make many adjustments, from tightening loose parts, to altering cable tension, to changing the height and position of my seat.

### Zip ties

What a godsend! They may look a bit tacky, but if you need to secure something in a pinch (like some cable housing or a fender that's come loose at the chainstay and is rubbing on the tire), they're hard to beat. It doesn't hurt to have a few sizes for fitting in different spaces, and if they're reusable zip ties, all the better!

### U-lock and cable

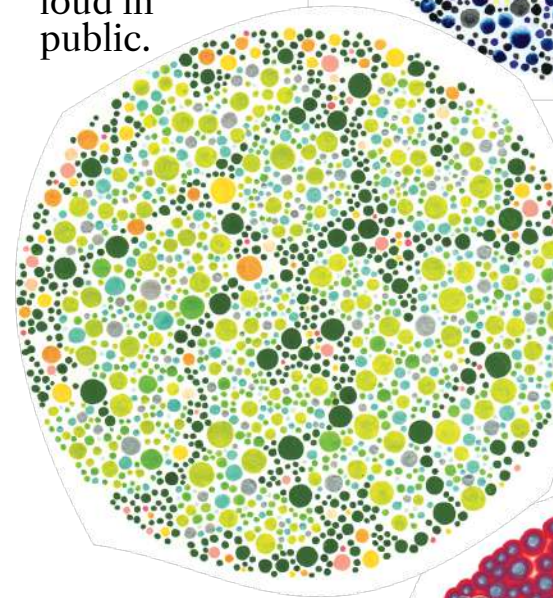
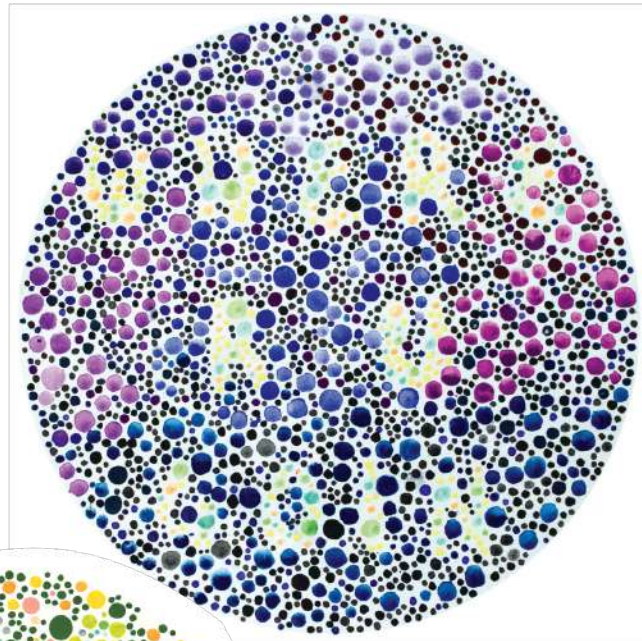
Last, but certainly not least, I make sure to carry a u-lock for my frame and a cable for my wheels. Even if I'll have a secure place to stash my bike at my destination, I never know what diversions may arise on my travels—maybe I need to grab an ingredient for dinner on my way home from work, maybe a friend wants to have a drink, maybe I just need to pee. In any event, I want to be prepared. U-locks aren't the only option, but they're my go-to. Just avoid those dinky, coiled combination locks you find at places like Target or Walmart—a set of bolt cutters will get through those in under 30 seconds. You've been warned!

That does it for my list of commuting essentials! Thanks for reading, and happy riding!



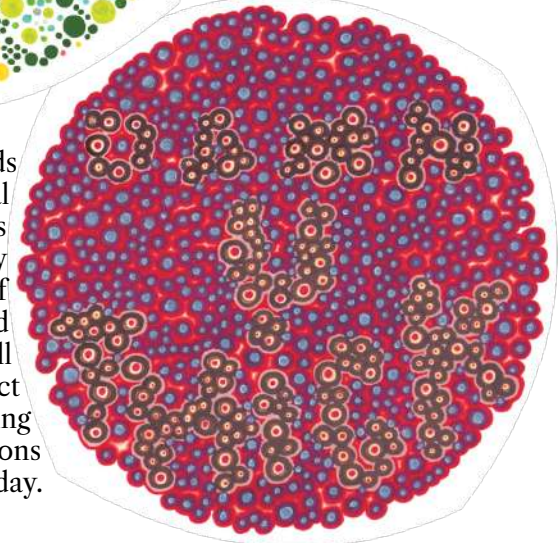
# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: MARCELLA MARSELLA

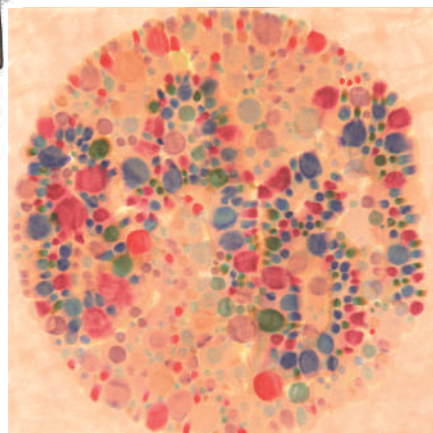
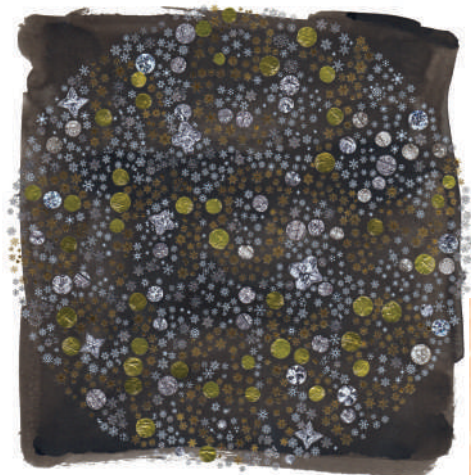
100% is a 2018 group of color blindness tests I created to name the pervasive yet partly unseen nature of street harassment, also known as the male gaze run amok out loud in public.



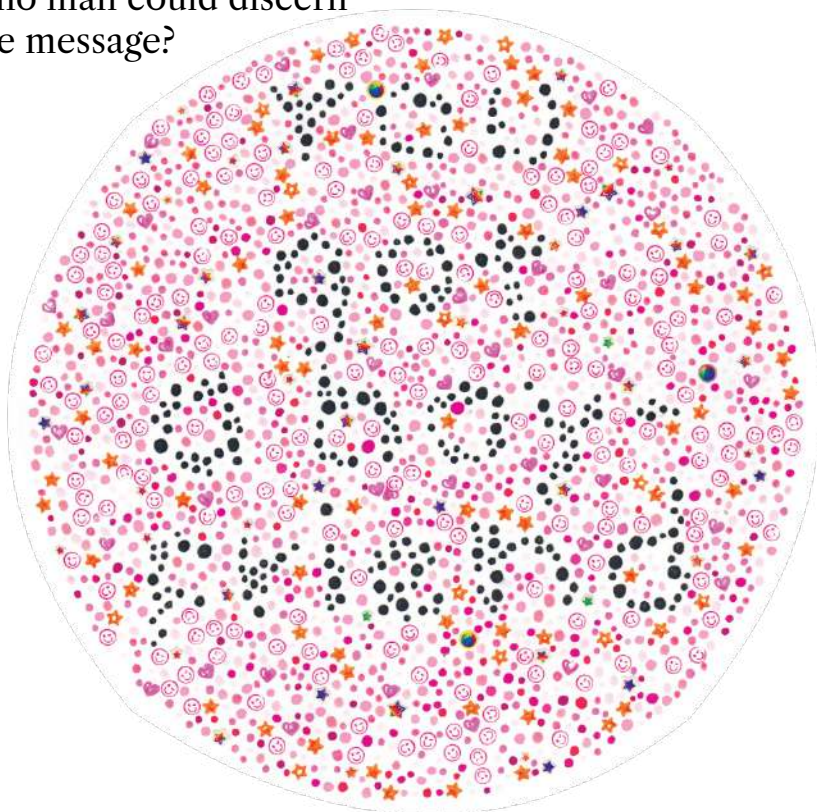
I took catcallers' actual words uttered to my friends and myself on the streets of Philadelphia ("you sexy," "smile for me," "damn you thick," etc) and placed them into the context of a quasi-legible optical illusion utilizing unorthodox materials such as my birth control pills and credit cards, nail decals, and bullet casings.

Putting the harasser's words down on paper in unusual and unexpected ways emphasized their seemingly contradictory nature of being both oppressive and laughable, encouraging all female viewers to connect over the experience of being hounded by watchful morons while going about their day.

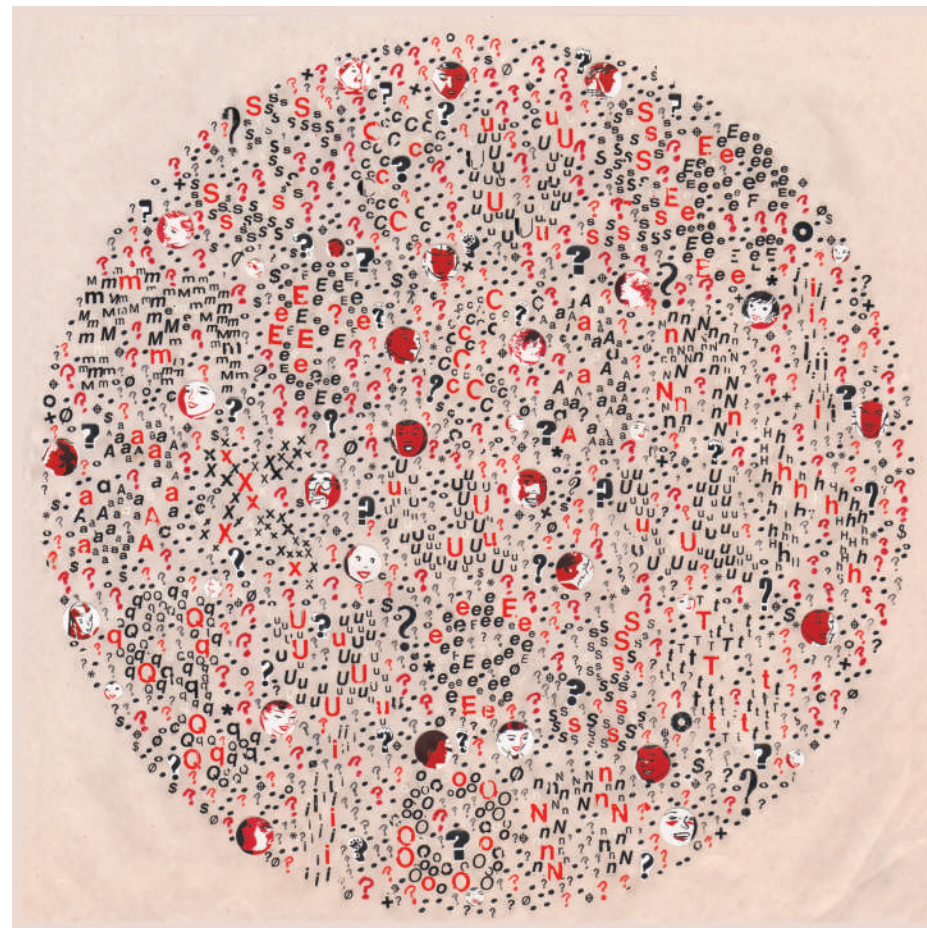




This series was born of the query: What would one woman say to another in broad daylight if no man could discern the message?



The signs and symbols known to one group may be invisible to another, allowing for open secret communication. And while there may be an audience for what happens on the street, behind closed doors we are often our only witness. I titled the series 100% after a quote from Christine Blasey-Ford when she said she was "100 percent" certain Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her in that Maryland bedroom back in 1982. We, like her, cannot unsee what we have seen.



**MARCELLA MARSELLA** is a patron saint of stray cats, hypomania, pasta & lube. Beloved friend, ex-wife, thrife, lover, only daughter & sister from another mister. Former nude model, haunted house zombie & boss of an underground paddleboat operation in Chi-town. Hardcore Water Baby! Part of this complete Mermaid Coven. Diver, survivor, drinker, driver. Loyal to the point of always looking for a fight, and holding a grudge in the Afterlife. Folk art enthusiast, mourner of Joann. Admirer of Yoko Ono and you.

**WEBSITE: MARCELLAMARSELLA.COM**

**IG: @MARCELLAMARSELLA**

*My grandmother was clairvoyant up until her death in 2013* is a statement that will only sound reasonable if you are among the 25% of Americans that believe in clairvoyance. Perhaps to you, the above statement is not any more odd than “my dog is a Basset Hound” or “my uncle is Finnish.” However, for the other ¾ of the country, it is a bridge too far. Clairvoyance is not a popular concept; this is probably because believing in it hinges on a belief in a mystical realm of beyondness that can only be accessed by a relative handful of people on Earth for no real reason. This belief never made sense to me. It still doesn’t. But my grandmother was clairvoyant up until her death in 2013. I am sure of that. If another dimension actually exists, she had access to it.

Grandma was my mother’s mother. Her psychic abilities were funniest when the stakes were low. Like her repeated winning of raffled-off gift baskets at my grade school every time they held a PTA fundraiser. From 2001-2003, without fail, Grandma would leave every fundraiser victorious, exiting the Bryn Mawr School gymnasium with a small trove of lotions or gift cards. Certainly not a life-changing event nor beyond comprehension, but frequent enough to be weird, especially when a hundred other people bought raffle tickets.

My mother once pointed out to her mother how strange it was that she kept winning gift baskets. Grandma didn’t have an explanation, but provided some perspective:

“Well, you know the anticipation you feel when they’re about to call the winning number?”

“Yes,” said my mother.

“I don’t feel that. I feel calm, because I know when they’re going to call mine.”

Born in 1929, my grandmother spent the first twenty or so years of her life in a part of Canada where they speak French. Her childhood seemed happy in that she had a happy, loving family with plenty of siblings, and sad for the same reasons life was tough and sad in the ‘30s and ‘40s for millions of other people around the world. I don’t remember hearing a lot about the bad times, though. Her stories about *mauvaise chance* (French for “shit luck,” an English phrase she would never use) were few and far between and, when they did come up, they were relayed with a punctuating laugh that implied “Can you believe that happened?”

One time a little person stole her marbles. She was six or eight years old and some kid with dwarfism came up to her on the street and shook her down for marbles she’d won at school, and she forked them over, ‘cause there was nothing she could do about it; he was the ringleader of a group of local toughs. When she’d laugh at the end of telling the story, I no longer wanted to take a time machine to 1937 just to dunk the pint-sized perpetrator into a garbage can.

“And at the time, those marbles were the only thing I’d ever won! And he just took them!”

Cut to the raffled baskets, sixty-seven years later.

Actually, you heard that story already. Cut to any of the other bizarre psychic happenings from her adult life:

**Her correct prediction that a man had leukemia.** At an automotive conference, she shook a man’s hand and later told my grandfather, “That man we met had something wrong with his blood.” He abruptly died three months later, the doctors citing blood cancer.

**Her rerouting of a car ride.** On the way to have pictures taken with my aunt and cousins, Grandma suggested, suddenly but gently, that my aunt take a specific street at a fork in the road — a direction that clashed with the GPS — for no particular reason. A ways down that street was a burning house, and they called 911. They were told they were the first to have called it in.

**Her being visited by ghosts on more than one occasion.** A Canadian relative of ours stayed at her house one weekend and died in his sleep. Ambulance comes, he’s pronounced dead, the whole thing. The next night, she saw him in the doorway, making a face that suggested “Sorry about dying at your house and messing up your weekend.”

It’s those ghosts that I think about the most. Grandma was a devout Catholic, about as much as one can be without making it everyone else’s problem, and Catholicism isn’t super heavy on ghosts. Catholics believe in a Heaven populated by spirits, but nobody really visits from there. The spirits are just supposed to be watching us like the old guys on the balcony from the Muppets, minus the snide remarks. There’s the Holy Ghost — an integral part of the faith — but that’s not the same as the radiant silhouette of Uncle Jean-Pierre swinging by to apologize for fucking up the long weekend with his untimely passing.

But Catholicism doesn’t outright deny ghosts, either. Maybe that’s how Grandma made ‘em both work, when she realized that both of her realities were allowed to exist in harmony. It probably also helped that she treated neither as burdens; they were gifts. Two distinct blessings. In that case, why wouldn’t she make room in her being, her spirit, for a hybrid of psychic acumen and the Word of God?

I write this during Holy Week, 2025, seventeen years removed from Holy Week mattering to me on any level, and one-thousand-ninety-two years after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead before joining His Father in Heaven some days later, as the story goes. These stories mattered a great deal to my grandmother. I can’t say that they mattered to her in the same way stories from and about her matter to me, but I’d like to think our hearts are/were filled with a similar volume, just from different sources. You try to hold onto that volume. I miss my grandmother with an ache that doesn’t go away, but it softens around the holidays, when that side of the family gets together. Since her passing, I haven’t seen her at the parties, but my mom’s oldest sister says she has—a comment that nobody really balks at, because ¾ of that side of the family is made of the 25%.

# A POMPEIIAN EPITAPH

BY PETER WAKEMAN SCHRANZ

Just outside the walls of Pompeii is the cemetery of Porta Nocera, dug up from beneath ancient ashes in 1952. This cemetery houses the tombs of those who died there when Pompeii was just some town, before it became that immortal example of natural annihilation.

Below is an epitaph found on one of its tombs, followed by an English translation. The author of the epitaph seems to have been a bitter enemy of the deceased, but it's unknown to me how such an enviable assignment fell to this person:

HOSPES PAVLLISPER MORARE  
SI NON EST MOLESTVM ET QVID EVITES  
COGNOSCE AMICVM HVNC QVEM  
SPERAVERAM MI ESSE AB EO MIHI ACCVSATO-  
RES SVBIECTI ET IVDICIA INSTAVRATA DEIS  
GRATIAS AGO ET MEAE INNOCENTIAE OMNI  
MOLESTIA LIBERATVS SVM QVI NOSTRVN MENTITVR  
EVM NEC DI PENATES NEC INFERI RECIPIANT

Stranger, linger a while if it's not too much trouble, and learn what you should shun: this man whom I had believed to be my friend. He brought accusers and repeated trials against me, but I give thanks to the gods and to my innocence: I have been freed of all trouble. May neither the gods of the home nor of the underworld receive the one of us who lies.



PHOTOS: MAUREEN CARROLL, YORK



PHOTO BY LIZ POWELL  
IG: @DREAMY.DILEMMA



BY DARBY EBELING

A technique for grasping a calming awareness of our surroundings in times of overwhelm, the idea with the “5-4-3-2-1 Method” is to get grounded by emphatically attending to what we usually tune out.

Take in the Philly sights, feelings, sounds, smells, and tastes with this rundown—or do one of your own.

## SEE (5)

Orange daylilies and sunflowers, yucca and boxwood in vibrant porches along the sidewalks | *West Philadelphia*

The elusive cream and green 15-Girard Trolley against the backdrop of patinated church spires, neighborhood hubs, and a long stone wall | *Along Richmond & Girard*

The muted teal of the Walt Whitman Bridge over the Delaware River, astride a new gap in the waterfront left by the Ikea Ship | *Pier 80, Port of Philadelphia, 2147 S Columbus Blvd.*

A wrought horizon of brick and iron, power coils and construction, and the occasional lonely, longstanding storefront sign | *The Rail Park, 1300 Noble St.*

The dazzling painted blue water of the koi pond mural across the sidewalk, sunlight finding rest between the slats of the pergola, and sculpted stone lions resolute against the slight breeze above the expressway | *Tenth Street Plaza, 10th & Vine*

## FEEL (4)

Bolts of cotton, nylon, and velvet, drawers of zippers, boards of buttons and appliques beneath your fingers | *Fabric Row, 4th St. between Bainbridge & Catharine*

Grass and leather on your feet, sunscreen and a water bottle in your palm, sweat and sun along your face as you sprint for the first time in 5 years to chase the football, soccer ball, rugby ball, footy, or whatever else you (maybe overzealously) decided to try out this season | *Memorial Hall Field, West Fairmount Park, 4231 Avenue of the Republic*

The rumble of the El in your legs, your ears, your mind as it gathers speed between Berks and Girard stations, clearing all thought as it goes | *Front & Palmer*

Wind in your hair and the straps of your helmet along your chin as you pedal along the center divide, for once getting somewhere truly fast | *American St. Protected Bike Lane*

## HEAR (3)

Barks, yips, and contented sighs from the dogs exploring (and trying to sneak out of) the park beside the Schuylkill | *Schuylkill River Park, 300 S 25th St.*

The clatter of tires over the bridge, the chatter of birds in the trees and weathered pylons (and maybe a “Go Birds”), and the churning of wakewater beneath barges and tour boats in the Delaware | *Between Pier 3 and the River Rink, at the beginning of Market St.*

The ethereal echoes of the Wanamaker Organ\*, blowing around naked and broken mannequins, ornate and empty glass cases, and the grandeur of long memory | *Wanamaker Building, 1300 Market St.*

## SMELL (2)

Bradford pear trees (yes, the ones you’re thinking of) in the mounting warmth of spring, precursing both the rushing to life of the rest of the street trees and the pervasiveness of hot trash in the summer | *Along every sidewalk you forgot would flower*

Sizzling onions and peppers, toasting bread, and blistering hot dogs wafting from between lines of cars, along the road, and in neat rows behind the stands in the stadiums | *Pattison Avenue*

## TASTE (1)

The neighbor kid’s lemonade—extra sweet (or maybe bitter) because they let (made) you pay with your phone | *Down the block*

\*Temporary ghost

Try it: What can you see? What can you feel? What can you hear? What can you smell? What can you taste? What else is there?





**BY BRIANNA BENOZICH**

Back when I was in sixth grade, every other network had their own knockoff of “Ghost Hunters” about men in their thirties hunting for ghosts in haunted houses, like a midlife crisis Shaggy and Scooby. There was one girl in our group of outcasts and weirdos, Caroline, who became obsessed with these ghost shows. She had started talking about the episodes while we did our usual activities of pulling pranks and drawing comic books, but it soon took a weird turn. One day while everyone was helping plan a prank on our teacher, Caroline came over and said, “Guys, there’s a ghost in my house.”

As she told us about the ghost opening and closing doors, everyone but me was intrigued. I was more interested in trying to plan this prank. But as the days went on, Caroline’s ghost stories got weirder and weirder. Apparently the ghost had a name, Alex, and was see-through, like a Casper situation. Caroline told us he was a cute Victorian boy with long hair and blue eyes (how he was both see-through and had blue eyes still puzzles me). All our friends were fascinated by her stories and always asked her when she and her ghost boyfriend were gonna kiss. Every recess turned into the Caroline Ted Talk where she would tell us crazier and dumber stories about Alex, from Alex writing her poems on the bathroom mirror to Alex somehow leaving flowers in front of her door. As everyone oohed and ahed, my eyes were rolling in the back of my head. Enough was enough. Caroline was hogging all the attention with her obvious lies and now no one ever wanted to do what I wanted to do.

That night, I set up my camera and tied a long piece of dental floss to my bedroom door. I stood behind the camera and filmed while I pulled the dental floss to open and close my door. It was the perfect fake ghost video. It was the perfect prank. The next day, as everyone was listening to another exciting installment of the Caroline and Alex saga, I came over with my camera and proudly showed everyone the fake ghost video. “Looks like Caroline isn’t the only one who can see ghosts,” I said. Everyone was amazed, and Caroline fumbled for words. “I-I-I can’t believe you also have a ghost,” she stuttered. After that, things went semi back to normal where our recesses were spent pulling pranks and drawing comics rather than talking about dead Victorian children. Caroline started hanging out with us less and less until she stopped hanging out with us altogether.

Just a couple years ago, I ran into Caroline at the local bodega. She looked the exact same as she did when she was in sixth grade. After we caught up a little bit, we hugged. That’s when Caroline whispered in my ear, “I still see Alex. I can’t wait to tell him I saw you.” We parted ways and I felt a shiver down my spine. Did Caroline actually believe she could see the ghost of a Victorian boy, or was this just some elaborate decade-spanning prank?

I think Caroline actually did believe Alex was real, because the thought of her being a better prankster than me all this time would be too crazy.



PHOTOS BY JENNIFER COSTO  
IG: @JENNIFERCOSTO



## TOP TEN BEST THINGS TO TOUCH

BY ELEANOR NABHOLZ

💧 COLD WATER WHEN YOU’RE HOT

💧 WARM WATER WHEN YOU DESPERATELY NEED A SHOWER

🐾 YOUR FAVORITE PET

☀️ A WARM BLANKET FRESH OUT OF THE DRYER

✧ A SMOOTH WOODEN BOWL

🐭 CHINCHILLAS

∞ NAILS AFTER A MANICURE

🪨 SMOOTH ROCKS

🧻 SOFT TOWELS

📖 WORN-OUT BOOK PAGES

# Tax the Rich:

## Challenging Philly Tax Politics "Common Sense"

In Philadelphia, centrist political pundits have long pushed a “common sense” understanding that Philly’s business and wage taxes are too high and property taxes are too low. They say things like “we should tax things that can’t move” and point to anecdotal evidence that companies are flocking to the suburbs because of Philly’s high taxes.

The Philly city budget funds a wide variety of things—for example, trash pick-up, street repair, parks, libraries, public health, and the fire department. The operating budget is funded primarily by three taxes: wage & net profits tax (46% of local tax revenue), real estate property tax (21%), and business income and receipts tax (BIRT) (16%). You pay wage tax if you work a job, you pay property tax if you own real estate (and often if you rent, as a pass-through to your landlord), and you pay BIRT tax if you own a business.

It’s true that some comparable cities rely more heavily on property taxes than Philly. But for several reasons, the assumption that property taxes are the better option deserves to be questioned. Philly has a high proportion of low income and middle class homeowners, large numbers of suburban commuters, and limitations due to the PA tax uniformity clause.

**Reducing business and wage tax rates, as Mayor Parker and City Council have decided to do this year, will shift the relative tax burden away from large businesses and high income workers and toward homeowners.** For retired or disabled homeowners on fixed incomes, the cut in wage taxes potentially has no benefit for their finances, while rising property taxes could push them toward losing their homes. Wage taxes also allow Philly to collect tax revenue from high income suburban commuters who use city services, while property taxes do not.

It’s particularly egregious that Mayor Parker’s plan codifies 13 years of major cuts to the business income and receipts tax (BIRT) while also getting rid of a \$100,000 BIRT exemption which dramatically reduces taxes for small businesses. The administration is blaming the loss of the exemption on a lawsuit, but they are making the choice to preemptively get rid of the exemption before the lawsuit has actually played out. **The result will be that about three-quarters of Philly businesses (the smallest ones) will have to start paying BIRT tax for the first time, while big corporations like Comcast get a tax cut.**

Unfortunately, Philly’s taxes are generally regressive due to the PA constitution’s uniformity clause, which requires tax rates to be flat. Whereas federal income tax rates range from 10% for the lowest earners to 37% for the highest earners, in PA all taxpayers must pay the same percentage for a given tax. Whether you’re making minimum wage or millions of dollars a year, if you live and work in Philadelphia you pay 3.75% of your income in City wage tax. But the city has been able to create some policies that make our taxes a little more progressive, like the BIRT exemption, the homestead exemption for homeowners, and the wage tax refund for low income workers. We should be leaning into these strategies, not abandoning them at the first sign of a challenge.

The assumption that it’s taxes, and not other factors like an under-resourced school system, that are driving companies to the suburbs, also deserves to be

challenged. Taxes can certainly be a factor in companies’ location decisions, but so are things like transportation, proximity to universities and potential workers, cultural amenities like restaurants and entertainment venues, and well-functioning city services. At the end of the day, businesses look for the best value for their business, not necessarily the lowest taxes.

One area where Philly cannot currently compete with the suburbs, unfortunately, is in our school system. It is all too common for young professionals to move to the suburbs after having kids in order to get into a public school district with a strong educational reputation. **What’s the number one thing we could do to improve Philly schools? Raise more tax dollars to adequately fund them, filling teacher and support staff vacancies, reducing class sizes, and repairing dilapidated school buildings.**

In the long term, Philly should pressure the state legislature to introduce a constitutional amendment to eliminate the tax uniformity clause, enabling us to create more progressive taxes. With Democrats inching closer to a majority in the State Senate and the potential for an anti-Trump wave in the coming years, there is a greater chance of actually doing so than there has been in decades.

In the short term, considering the growing likelihood of a recession caused by government layoffs, deportations, and tariffs, and unprecedented threats of cuts to federal funding for our city, Philadelphia should not be doing anything to undercut our ability to collect funds to pay for crucial city services. **Local tax cuts will mean less resources for trash collection, rec centers, libraries, schools, community college, health centers, and more.**

Mayor Parker and most members of City Council are following the recommendations of the Tax Reform Commission, composed almost entirely of business leaders, to cut business and wage taxes—really just the same old “common sense” tax plan that business leaders have been pushing for decades. Yet political leaders know that raising property taxes would be extremely politically damaging for them, so they’re not even trying to actually reform the tax structure. They’re just cutting tax rates without any plans for generating replacement revenue other than the failed trickle-down economics logic. It’s not actually all that different from the Trump-Musk plan to cut taxes for the super-rich while gutting social services, just less extreme.

**We deserve political leaders who stand up for taxing the rich to fund public goods and services, not the same neoliberal “common sense” that has brought us to our current state of crumbling schools, unaffordable housing, and barely functioning health and social services.** The Working Families Party City Council candidates introduced their own “People’s Tax Plan,” which would have expanded the wage tax refund program for low income workers, doubled the BIRT exemption to support small businesses, and introduced a wealth tax (a small tax on people’s holdings of stocks and bonds, excluding retirement and education savings accounts), however this plan did not gain traction among the Democratic majority, and every Democrat voted for Parker’s tax plan instead. The Democrats on Council need to feel the heat—why are they aligning with Trumpian trickle-down economics and austerity, instead of a politics of wealth redistribution, equity, and abundance?

—ANONYMOUS



BREAD IS A SMELL

I WANT TO SMELL FOREVER



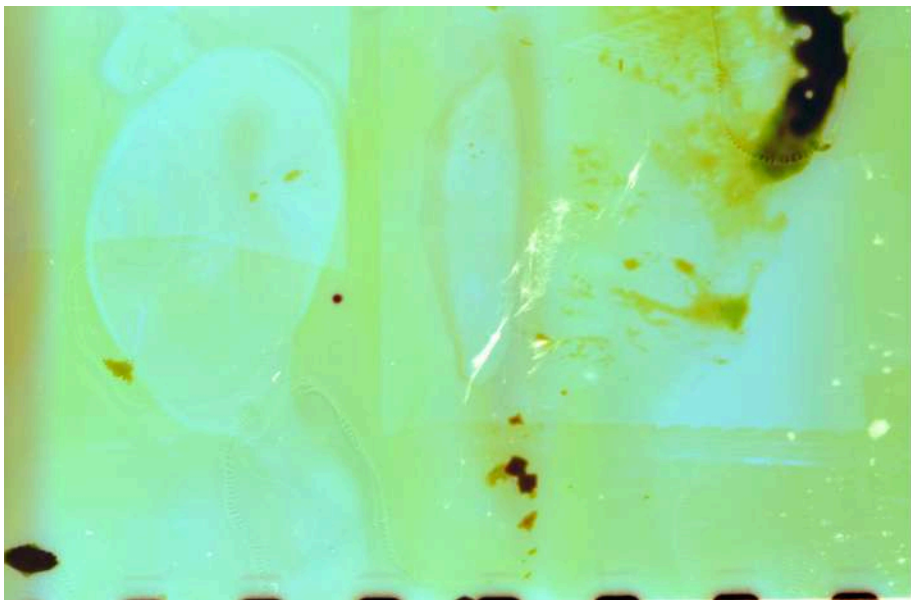
I think it's because when I was growing up, I would visit my grandmom in South Philly, and we'd go to her corner store for lunchmeat and Yoo-hoo. Back then the store was called Nino's, but now it's Mike and Matt's, both of whom are very lovely people, the kind you hope take over a spot like that.

Anyway, every visit I'd open up the plastic bin of rolls just to take a hit of the bread-air inside. It smelled so good. Like bread and nothing else. Who knows if the rolls were Amoroso's, Sarcone's, Liscio's, some other. What did it matter?

The bread bin is still there, but I always resist sticking my face in it. I cite carb aversion, but really I'm too self-conscious to do it without actually buying a roll. And I never really need a loose roll.

The rest of the place smells like a blend of grated parm and deli oil, which lingers in my hair all day—the perfume of a place I'd bottle up just to spritz onto my grave.

—KATE CATINELLA



Salt & Vinegar Soup BY MICHAL  
IG: @5MGLEXAPRO

*"I made it look funky by boiling the film with vinegar and salt so it's sort of sight & taste & the developing chemicals are smelly so smell too! The ambience sort of gives ghost"*

HE CAME (TO THE GIG)... HE SAW (THE BANDS)... HE CONQUERED

# VINNY VIDI VICI

NEW MUSIC REVIEWS AND GIG PHOTOGRAPHY

BY VINCE BARRERAS OF ABANDON EVERYTHING RECORDS



One thing's for sure, two things for certain: there's about as many shoegaze bands in Philly as you'll find Twisted Tea cans at a Danny's show. "Philly shoegaze" is a thing. If you like groups like My Bloody Valentine, Ride, or Slowdive, I think **Cigarettes for Breakfast** will fit right at home with you. I find their new offering, *Slow Motion*, to be one of the most accessible shoegaze records you'll ever find. This one leans into more catchy and pop-driven songs with modern production. The band gives you songs that range from 2-3 minutes (sometimes longer to really drive home the spacey nature of the genre), really short and memorable songs, but you'll still get those wailing guitars and insane amounts of reverb and distortion. This is almost a shoegaze/punk record... *shoegazi*.

The record release show was held at the one and only hot dog bar, **Ortlieb's** (a sell out!). *Slow Motion* will probably be a favorite of mine for the entire year. We had a lot of fun methodically planning singles, promo, music videos, etc. A release plan is always a lot of fun when you see it fall into action—when the work you put in comes to fruition, it's all worth it. Cigarettes for Breakfast are really a special group. I love these guys and I'm lucky to call all of them my best friends.



# VINNY VIDI VICI



**Eraser** is one of my absolute favorite bands in Philly. Straight up. Like this band is so special. If you knew nothing about them, you'd immediately notice the chemistry and camaraderie of the group. These four people are best friends with a deep love for one another, and it shows in the live performance. The band is always having so much fun, always joking and laughing.

The songs they write are incredibly catchy and fun. It's a nice balance of wild and out-there punk music with pop sensibilities. Eraser plays no games and gets straight to the point. The songs hit you in the face, and Sonam's stage presence as a front person is infectious. Maybe I'm biased, but straight up, I think they are one of the best front people in the city. I've never heard anyone sing even remotely close to Sonam—such a unique voice, demanding attention. Especially the way their synth playing intertwines with the melodies and rhythm section (Kat and Juliette ball out fr). Pier has an absolutely mad guitar tone calling to mind Keith Levene of Public Image Limited.

Their release show at **Jerry's on Front** was nothing short of memorable. They packed the place out, played a set that was equally as powerful, and celebrated a truly remarkable record that I think a lot of people will have in their top of the year. If you have never seen Eraser, what the fuck are you doing? Go see them immediately.



# VINNY VIDI VICI



From the depths of **The Sanctuary** came **Condumb**. They literally ripped the place up. Everyone came together to celebrate the debut 7" release of this lovely bunch of people. The set was short, and sweet, and emotional, and cathartic, and probably one of the loudest shows I've seen this year. You should grab their 7" when it drops. It's a handful of songs that you'll just keep listening to over and over and over and over again. There's something about bands like this that just can't write a bad song; when a group of people such as these four get together, they're guaranteed to write some bangers. I think this is one of the most important punk releases ever and I was super honored to contribute the back photograph for the 7". I'm eternally grateful to the group for seeing an image I made and choosing it to be printed on their record—and also to Jeff and Stupid Bag Records, one of the coolest record labels in Philly. Amy, Trish, Will, and Kyle crushed it. The artwork and design of this record is truly incredible work from Ryan Fromdeland. It's "I'm buying this record and framing it forever" good. Legendary Philly punk release all around.



# **TRANSIT CHRONICLES:**

## **STOOP KIDS**

BY ROXANNA LEIGH ALVINI

*"Stoop Kids" is Part 3 of a multi-part serial. You can read the first two parts in Citywide issues 1 & 2 (full PDF on our website: philadelphiacitywide.com).*

**JULY 11TH, 2004**

**"Michael, wait!"** Rosie screamed as she sprinted from the storm door off the front stoop and down the black asphalt of Watkins Street. J.D. turned around, making Michael stop next to him.

"Come on," he whined, grabbing J.D.'s arm in protest, but J.D. didn't budge. She halted in front of them. Michael turned as she flung her torso over her knees in want of air. "She'll kill me if I bring her with us."

Rosie lifted herself back to a standing position. She caught J.D.'s eye first, he gave her a sympathetic look.

"Promise you won't tell her where we went today," J.D. finally spoke, watching his friend shake his head and walk away. "Deal?" He held his hand out for her to shake. She made a gesture to zip her lips. He laughed. She looked past him to see her brother already at the end of the block.

"First one wins!" She smacked his outstretched hand and ran at full speed. He caught up after a few seconds, leaping onto the sidewalk in front of her. He cut her off, slamming into Michael from behind.

"What the fuck!" He yelled, pushing J.D. off. He responded by playfully punching him in the chest.

"Name of the game! Keep up, bro." He laughed at his annoyed face. Rosie couldn't help joining in as he continued to hop around Michael like a boxer, giving him playful jabs.

"Fuck off!" Michael finally punched him hard in the chest, they both stopped. She watched their silent argument. Finally, they nodded and started down 11th in silence.

"You two are morons. Like my ma won't find out." Michael finally gave one last frustrated retort.

"You can tell her it was my idea," J.D. responded honestly.

"Yo, the dynamic duo back together again!" Chris yelled when they approached Tasker. The 29-bus sped past them before they dared to cross the asphalt that divided their paths of concrete.

"Your dad's not making you work today?" Michael asked as the three of them exchanged fist bumps.

"Naw, he stuck my sis with the grind. Speaking of sis, what's up little Ro?" Chris said everything in quick succession as he munched on a pack of Kings. He offered them the chalk-like sticks

that barely resembled cigarettes.

Rosie shook her head before turning her attention towards the island where Tasker, Passyunk, and 11th merged. There was a fence around the center. The white-walled shack that had been there had disappeared, leaving an empty space in its place. Why do things have to change? Chris followed her gaze.

"Man, I miss that water ice," he said as if he knew what she'd been thinking.

"I bet you do! Sucking on those dry shits," J.D. laughed. Chris flipped him off.

"Why don't we go to your pop pop's shop then?" He asked, putting away the loaded finger.

"Let's go!" He answered quickly, starting in a sprint down Passyunk. They all jogged after him. The sun radiated its ninety-degree heat. The humidity was just the cherry that topped the sweaty sundae. It took them twenty minutes, but they reached 9th and Christian minus five pounds of sweat each.

"Yo pop pop!" J.D. yelled, leaning into the smooth metal counter of Willie's Sandwich and Water Ice Shop.

"Jared?"

"Yeah, it's me, dad. Where's pop pop?" He asked, walking around the counter through the open door inside as a car sped past blasting Outkast's "Roses."

"That song was written about you," Michael laughed, holding his pinched nose to Chris, who punched his arm in response. Rosie rolled her eyes and looked across the street to 12 Steps Down, where a few people were leaning against the railing out front, blowing clouds of nicotine into the air.

"Michael!" Mr. Amato Junior yelled. They all turned to see J.D. and his dad appearing through the window. "What are you doing letting your little sister leave the neighborhood?"

Michael started to respond in protest, but not before J.D. jumped to their defense. "She just wanted some water ice."

Mr. Amato Junior started handing them cups full of the syrupy slush. They each stepped up taking them gratefully. Mr. Amato Junior shook his head.

"Then I better see you turn back around after this, right?"

"Alright," J.D. mumbled as his dad gave him a soft smack on the back of his head.

"I'll make sure to give your nonna a call then." he added while his son walked back outside.

Just then Mr. Amato Senior appeared around the corner. Noticing his grandson he immediately started waving to them.

"What are you doing? I told you to go home!" Mr. Amato Junior yelled in exasperation.

"I just needed some fresh air. Go, get some yourself," he said, waving off his son's comment. He hugged J.D. before addressing the rest, "Christopher, Michael, Rosemarie. How's your mother doing?"

"She's fine, thank you," Michael responded embarrassedly.

"Shame to lose one's husband and father like that. Huh, Salvatore?"

"Yes, pop, it's very sad. I'm sorry again for your loss, you two," Mr. Amato Junior responded, walking away.

"A friend of my cousin in Naples. Picture of health, just like your father. No one knew there was a tumor either, and he left behind his wife and their twin babies." Mr. Amato Senior shook his head. "Well, let us know if she needs anything. Your namesake was a good man. We'll miss him."

"Thank you, sir," they both monotonically responded. He nodded sympathetically, pinching Rosie's cheek as he passed her to go back inside.

"Better get going, huh?" Chris whispered as they all finished their once-full cups. J.D nodded, looking toward his dad back at the window. In a sudden jolt of inspiration, J.D grabbed Rosie's hand, steering them both across 9th and past Lorenzo's.

"We're taking the long way," he whispered to her. Michael and Chris instantly turned to follow them. She felt her face flush from the sudden heat building under her skin.



Chris and Michael were in a heated discussion over the semantics of Yu-Gi-Oh! so they ignored the fact J.D and Rosie had fallen behind. The 45 whooshed past as they crossed 11th and Washington. J.D noticed how silent Rosie was compared to the girl he remembered a year ago. He glanced to see the worried expression that seemed to be her fallback.

"You okay?" he asked. She looked at him in surprise; her lips still had a hint of vivid red from the cherry flavor. She shrugged and they continued in awkward silence. He looked over at her again before saying what was really on his mind.

"I'm sorry about my pop pop."

"It's okay," she said softly, glancing at Michael and Chris who were now half a block away. She continued. "I just miss dad. And mom too now."

"But you still have her?" J.D questioned.

"She won't notice we left. Michael says she will, but ever since he died like that—I mean he just fell asleep, like every other night..." She trailed off. "I've missed you, too."

J.D felt his legs freeze to the spot. Rosie stopped with him, but seeing his stunned look she quickly avoided his gaze. He didn't know what he felt, but all he wanted in that moment was for everything to go back to the way it had been before. Before her dad died, before they packed up and moved away. He didn't like this feeling of being home and not being home.

"Even though I moved away, that doesn't mean I'm gone. You know that, right?" He could see a few tears freefalling, so he grabbed her into a hug.

"I'll always be here for you. No matter what. I promise. Okay?" he spoke into the folds of her hair that smelled like fresh rain. *She won't feel alone like this again, I'll make sure of it.* He felt her take a few shaky breaths before releasing herself. She raised her pinky. He smiled at the gesture, returning it.

"I promise," he repeated.

"Then I'll always be here for you too," she whispered as they finally dropped their fingers in confirmation.

"What are youse doing?" Michael yelled. They both jumped like they'd been statically shocked. There was a full block between them now. *Soon it'd be another world.*



*no taste, no smell, no problem* BY GRACE BULLOCK



*Untitled (Kodak Portra shot on Holga, 2012)*

PHOTO BY AMANDA K. RETOTAR

# TRUST YOUR SENSES

As a way to get grounded, try recording some of the things you sense. You can refer back to Darby Ebeling's piece at the center of this issue for inspiration. We acknowledge that everyone's perception and abilities are different, and that said, this is just a guideline—we encourage you to be creative and replace any given section with a sense that suits you better. After all, our senses need not be isolated from each other and are certainly not limited to our physical perceptions.



5 THINGS SEEN:

4 THINGS FELT:

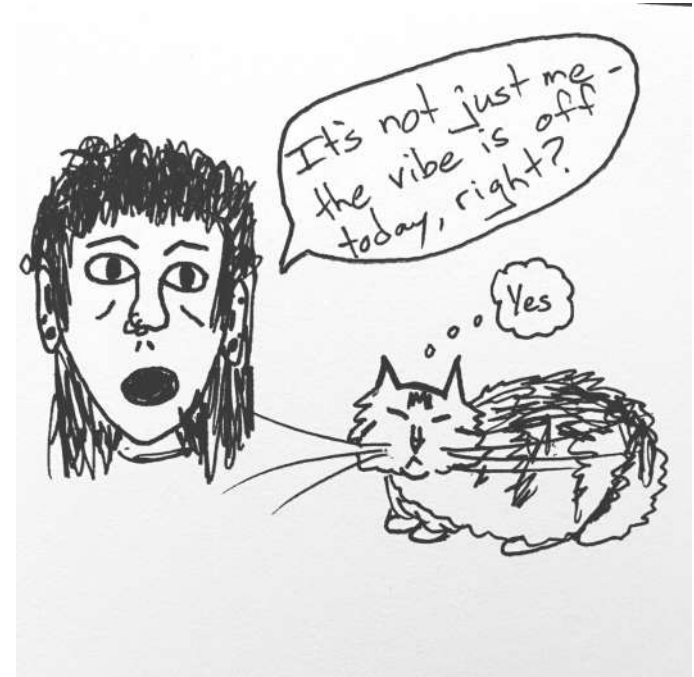


3 THINGS HEARD:



2 THINGS SMELLED:

1 THING TASTED:



*Me and Mr. Pibb (2010?-2023, RIP) BY AMANDA K. RETOTAR*



*Abundance (Woodland Ave.)* PHOTO BY AMELIA PITCHERELLA

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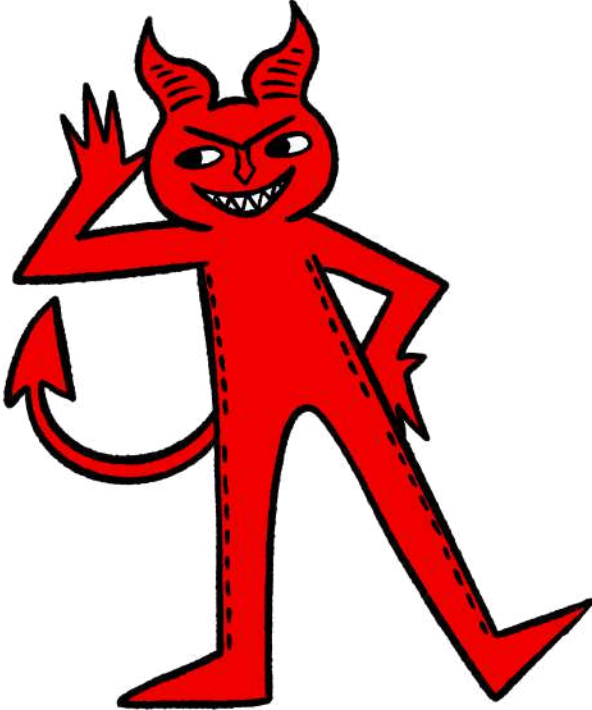
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