

Combining Voices

Literary Competition
2023-2024

MORRIS
MUSEUM of ART



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BILL RANDAZZO

1st Place
Third Grade Division
Savannah River Academy

The Freedom Pot

On a starry night, David Drake sat on his master's farm, thinking what it would be like to be a free man. He was working on his latest pot. He called it "a free pot." He had been separated from his family and had been trying to get back to his family ever since. His master did not care for the law against teaching slaves. One day his master came running up to him suddenly. His master had taught him to read and write. His master said to come fast. He and his master went to find his book. And he hid it under a rock in his shack. He went with his master to the front of his master's house. There stood two men holding a piece of paper. The man on the

right said, "We have an offer. Sir Charles III will give you three hundred dollars in exchange for your . . . wait, what is that?" He continued, "Is that a book in your slave shack?" "Wait! I can explain!" exclaimed Dave's master. Dave's master got taken away by the man on the right and Dave got taken by the man on the left. Dave and the man got on a horse and rode away. He asked where they were going and the man said jail. It was an old rusty place with stone walls. They stopped and went inside. The man at the counter said that he was in jail cell number 281. He also said that there was a family of slaves there. The man took him to the cell. Then Dave

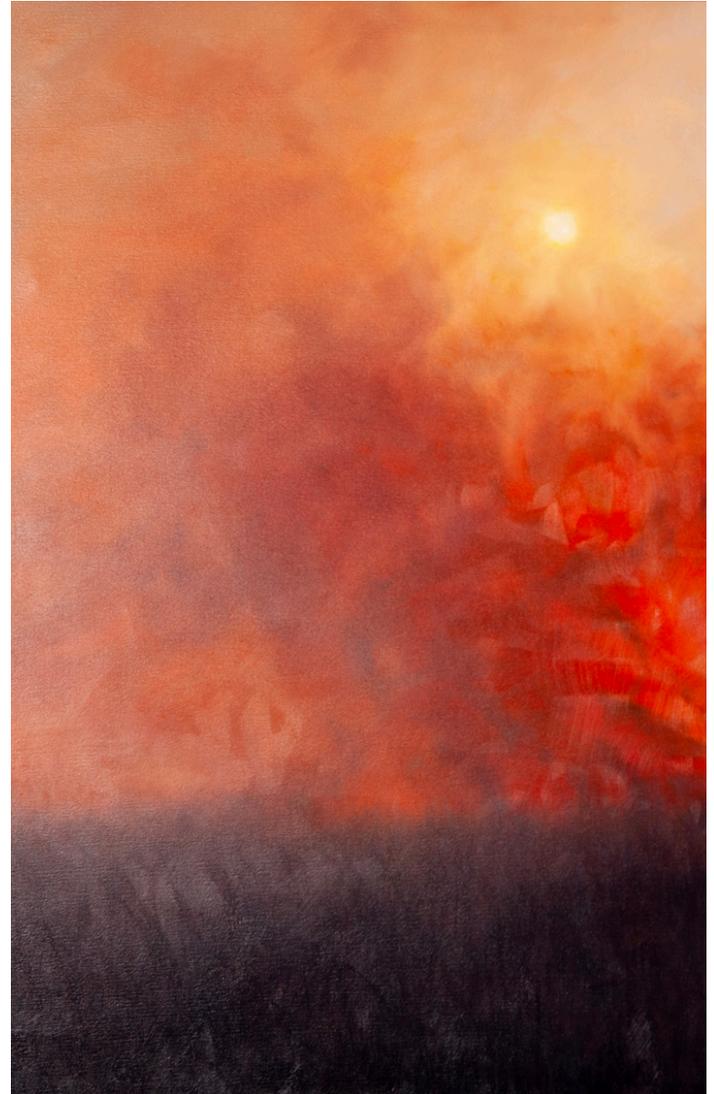
saw them, his family was in there! He ran up to them and said, "We need to escape." After the man left them, they made a plan. They found a shovel. Dave quickly smashed the window. He helped his three sons out first, then his wife and finally himself. They ran all the way to the border of Canada. But then the slave catchers found them. The slave catcher said that only four of them could go. Dave said, "I will stay!" His family cried out but David Drake was killed.



David "Dave" Drake, Stoneware storage jar, 1857. Alkaline-glazed clay.
Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.
Donated in memory of Rebecca Clark Rice by her family – William Little Clark, Marian Carter Clark, Robert Williams Rice Jr., Robert Williams Rice III, and Carter Elizabeth Rice.

AIDAN ALVAREZ

Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames- Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (details)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.



2nd Place
Third Grade Division
Savannah River Academy

As the Wind Blows

As the wind blows in the breeze
The fire crackling before my knees
The trees burning right before me
Now I ponder, who else sees
This beautiful sight Besides me?
But it's sad to watch such beauty burn
Such as pine, oak, and fern
As for me
With nothing to do
I wonder where are you?
And can you see this sight too?

PAYTON BARGER

3rd Place
Third Grade Division
Dearing Elementary School

The Big Fight



Pamela Vinton Ravenel, *Georgia Crackers* (detail), circa 1935. Oil on canvas.
Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.

One day a family went on a picnic but then they saw that they had a flat tire so the little girl got out the car and checked the tire then she said "Aw nuts the tire is flat," so Dad got out of the car, and he saw he had no signal. So, he said to his family, "Ok everyone let's go eat instead and find some signal." That's when he saw it with his own two eyes. . . a crocodile. He looked straight into the crocodile's eyes and then ran straight at him and strangled him. His wife Ashley yelled, "What the heck are you doing?" He yelled back and said, "I won. I won. I won against a crocodile." Everyone cheered for him. But then the little girl Lily said, "Mom, Dad, come here you have to see this." So, they ran to her and saw an ocean. They screamed and said, "We're free. We're free." So, they got their food and had a picnic under a tree. But the crocodile had come back. The Dad yelled, "You will not defeat me," at the crocodile. That's when the crocodile gave him a peace offering. Then he hugged the crocodile. Then the Dad said, "That was the wrong crocodile," then they ran as fast as they could into the water. And then the little girl and her grandma ran far behind. Then there was a big ginormous whale. So, then the whale ate them, and they were stuck in the whale's mouth. They tickled it and rubbed it and slapped it. They did everything to get out. Then the

whale filled with water, then they went flying out of the blow hole. The crocodile was flying with the Dad and the other one too. Then the little girl and the grandma just burst out laughing. They looked at the Dad, Roddert, and he looked like he died. So when he stopped flying he looked in bad condition. The Dad had flown so far he landed on the other island. Then Ashley was just standing there shocked. She looked frozen solid. So she fell on the ground. Then the Dad woke. He jumped up and said, "I will fight you no matter what." Then everybody swam toward him, and then the Dad swam to them. They all floated in the middle of the ocean and that's when they got sucked up by their feet. The current was under them. It was so strong they almost drowned. But luckily the current was heading toward shore, so they got out. Then he went back to fighting the crocodile. So Ashley was like, "It looks fun." So, she ran to the island with the crocodile and she joined the fight. And then the Grandma was like, "You two look so silly my, my, my, you need to let me join in. Whee! How I love fighting crocodile." That was when the little girl was running toward the truck and was talking to the stranger walking along the street. So then that man aid, "Hello young girl." So, she said hello back to the stranger. Then he said, "Do you need any help young lady?"

“Actually, I do need help. My dad’s truck broke down and right now I think he needs a doctor. He has been fighting that crocodile for the past few days.” “I can call a doctor and a tow truck to get y’all out of this here place.” “It’s disgusting. . .well not really,” grandma adds. “Well anyway the tow truck is here. I better get going, bye.” “That stranger makes me angry.” Lily said. “Well, we better get going. Y’all come on Dad,” she yelled.

THE END!!!!



Pamela Vinton Ravenel, *Georgia Crackers*, circa 1935. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.

MELCHOR FABILLAR

1st Place
Fourth Grade Division
Dearing Elementary School

The Loch Ness Monster



Louis Joseph Bahin, *Natchez under the Hill (detail)*, 1852. Oil on canvas.
Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.

Chapter One: The Battle of Ages

Me and my friends were in the water on a small sailboat in a foggy bog. "I think we should go back to shore guys," Charlie said. "Be quiet Charlie," Daniel said. "Guys let's not argue, okay," I said. "Fine," Daniel said. "Okay, but I still think we should go back to shore because of the Loch Ness monster," Charlie said shaking. "It's not real," Daniel sighed... Suddenly a black creature came rushing towards the boat under the water, none of us realized it until the boat started to rock side to side a little bit a little bit, but more each time until it was uncontrollable. I almost fell off the side of the boat. "What's going on!?" Daniel said shocked. Suddenly from the fog came "Come on guys, don't forget we're here for that creature, the Loch Ness monster," a voice yelled. "Help!" I shouted. BOOM!! A foreign ship came out of the gloom and they shot their darts, cannons, and threw some old rusty mine bombs. "Raaaaaaaawr!!!" The creature screeched so loud my ears were ringing. "Help!!!" I yelled again. Suddenly, a tentacle came out of the

water. "That ain't the Loch Ness monster, that's the kraken," someone said. The tentacle lunged at me. Luckily another monster came out of the water and bit the tentacle. "There it is, the Loch Ness monster. Now fire away, fire away, fire away," someone repeated. "Raaawr!!!" The kraken went back down to the bottom of the trench followed by the Loch Ness monster. "Darnit, we let him get away."

Chapter Two: The New Journey Ahead

Soon a boat came towards us but it wasn't the one we were hoping for. It was the pirates, but we were still grateful for them coming to save us. "So who are you three?" The pirate questioned. "I-I-I'm . . ." "Well come on," he demanded politely. "I'm Charlie." "You," the pirate said. "I'm Daniel." "Good now what about you?" I was an orphan unlike my friends, so I basically didn't have a name. "Um Willow," I said. Though it was just a fake name it would have to work for right

now. "Hm well y'all are officially a part of the crew now," he said joyfully but not playfully. "Wait, so we're not gonna become your slaves?" Charlie said, puzzled and relieved at the same time. "What? Of course not," he said. Charlie sighed in relief. "Y'all look like y'all are tired, go to bed," he said. So we started to walk to the door that said bedroom. When I opened the door there were 6 bunk beds and one regular bed in the middle of the room. "I call top of the bunk bed," Daniel said gleefully. "Aw come on," Charlie said. "I guess I'll take the bottom of the bunk bed," I said joyfully. "Seriously you two," Charlie said aggravated. The next morning, I got up just to hear Daniel snoring like a pig. I walked to the door leading outside. I opened it to see people climbing ropes singing songs and even playing some chess. "Here you go," someone said. I looked up to see the same person I met yesterday. He dropped me a medium sized box. "It's for you, also my name is Astro. Well actually, my crew calls me Captain Astro," Astro said with a grin on his face. "What is it?" I asked. "You'll see," he responded. I opened the box to see a dagger and a dagger holder. "It's a megalosaurus tooth-blade," he said with the grin still on his face.

Chapter Three: The Hallucination

"Wait, really?!" I said in disbelief. A megalosaurus is an A ranking beast. Legends say that its tooth can create wind slashes that can cut through stone. I was mesmerized. "So what am I going to do with it?" I questioned. "You and your friends are going on a mission tomorrow," Astro said smirking. "Wait, what?" I said shocked. "Yep you sure are," Astro said with his smirk growing from ear to ear. "Wait, so what type of mission?" I asked. "You'll see . . ." he said. So I went to the door to the bedroom to wake my friends up to tell them about the mission but they weren't there. Where are they? I thought trying to keep my calm. "Hey guys you can come out now . . . Charlie, Daniel," I said hoping for an answer. Where could they be? I thought again. "Oh no, oh no, oh no . . ." "They are where you least think they are," a voice said. "What, who are you?" I said I was still confused. I ran outside to tell Captain Astro what just happened.

When I opened the door, I fell into a puddle of water. What's going on? I thought I saw a light ahead of me. "I could have sworn I was on the ship," I said, confused and scared. I started running towards the beam of light. It looked like it was endless. Suddenly I was back on the ship, and Charlie and Daniel were in front of me looking worried. "You guys are okay," I said, breathing heavily. "Of course we're okay. But what about you, you were sleeping for a week!" Daniel and Charlie said at the same time. What's going on? I thought to myself. I pushed Daniel and Charlie out of the way and limped to the door. When I did, I saw just a bright light and heard people singing everywhere. It's coming from every angle, but I couldn't figure out where the ringing was coming from. I looked to my side and saw that the blade was still there. I sighed but still couldn't figure out where that ringing was coming from. I tried putting my hands on my ears to stop the ringing, but it did not work in my favor. The ringing didn't stop. It got even louder.

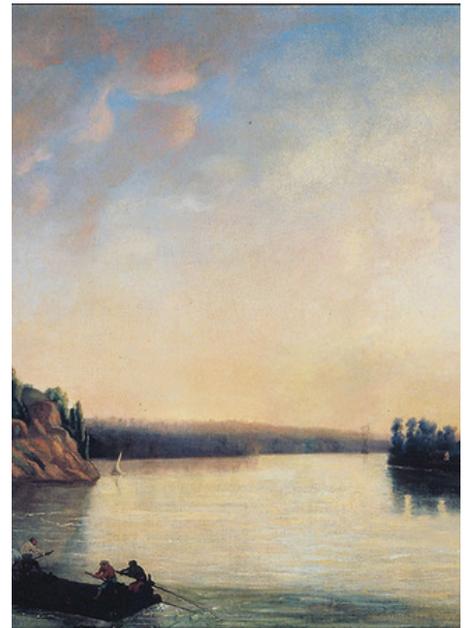
To be continued.

BLYTHE HONEYCUTT

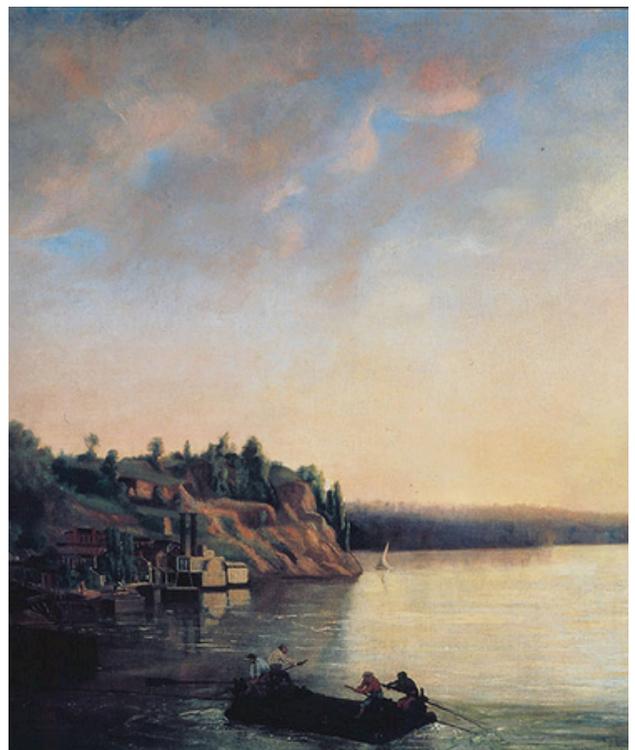
2nd Place
Fourth Grade Division
Savannah River Academy

When the Day Goes Down

When the day goes down and the night comes up,
The leaves start to blow,
The animals soon sleep.
It goes quiet.
I pray for another good day,
I look out my window and watch the sunset over the horizon.
The wind whistles softly to the flowers.
The petals fall in the river,
And drift out into the sun.
The sky turns pink and orange slowly,
When the moon shows its glow.
The first star appears.
After the night has risen,
Dreams take flight.



Louis Joseph Bahin, *Natchez under the Hill* (detail), 1852. Oil on canvas.
Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.



Louis Joseph Bahin, *Natchez under the Hill* (detail), 1852. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.

MA'KAILAH HUNTER

3rd Place
Fourth Grade Division
Norris Elementary School

Wind Driven Flames

The sun that burns the trees.

The crackling fire that burns the leaves.

The smoke that wilted the flowers.

I watched the fire burn for hours.

I sat down upon the sandy shore,

While the breeze blew the trees even more.

The whole island was burnt down.

Then I wondered what I would do now.



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

JA'LAYSIA PASCHAL

1st Place
Fifth Grade Division
Dearing Elementary School

Trapped in Heaven

Once in a small town, where love's tale unfurled,
A girl named Brooke, her heart in a whirl.
She met a boy, oh so charming and kind,
But her family's disapproval, she soon would find.

Their love was a flame, burning bright and true,
But her family's doubts, like a storm, grew.
They couldn't see the boy's heart of gold,
Their judgment clouded, their opinions bold.

But Brooke, determined, stood by his side,
In love's embrace, they would not hide.
They faced the challenges, hand in hand,
Their love, a force, they couldn't withstand.

She tried to show her family the love they shared,
But they turned a blind eye, too caught up in despair.
But love knows no boundaries, it conquers all,
And Brooke and her love, they would stand tall.



Pamela Vinton Ravenel, *Georgia Crackers (detail)*, circa 1935. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.

With each passing day, their bond grew strong,
Their love, a melody, like a beautiful song.
They proved their love through actions and deeds,
Ignoring the doubts and the judgmental creeds.

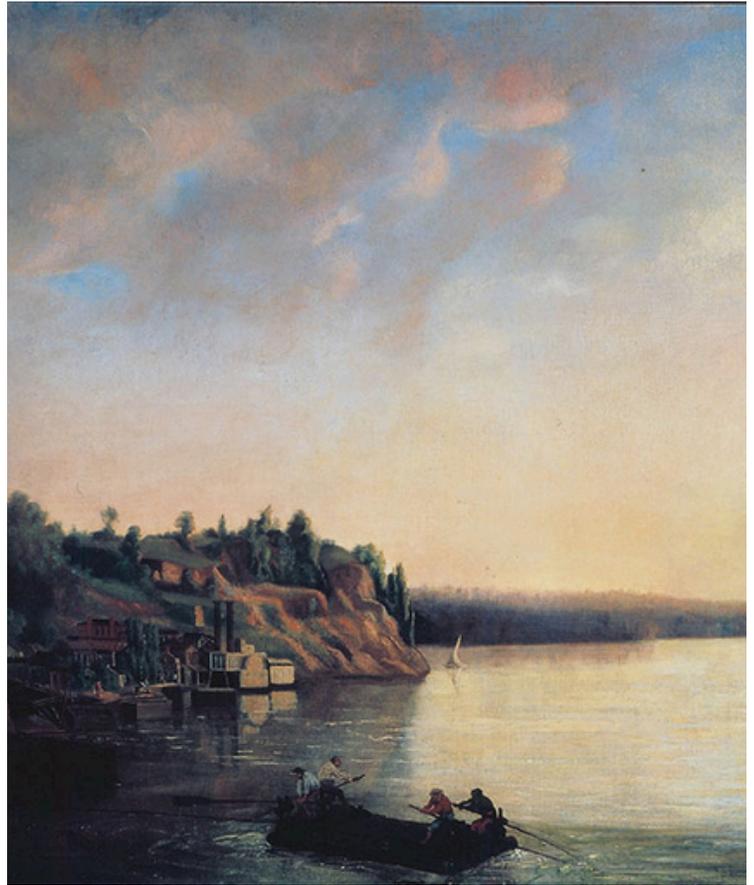
And slowly but surely, her family's hearts softened,
As they witnessed the love that couldn't be forgotten.
They saw the joy in Brooke's eyes so bright,
And realized their judgments were not right.

In the end, love prevailed, breaking down the walls,
Brooke and her love, standing proud and tall.
For love knows no boundaries, it's pure and divine,
And in their hearts, forever it would shine.

JACOB P.

2nd Place
Fifth Grade Division
Cedar Ridge Elementary School

Natchez and Its River



Louis Joseph Bahin, *Natchez under the Hill* (detail), 1852. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.

I wake up and walk to my hill, looking at the town below. The clouds hover in the rainbow sky this morning. Water glistens in the morning light from the sun. Water swishes as boats hurry across to make it to the dock. Sailboats rush over the water to the dock as well. People roar orders like lions as the boats make it to the dock startling cats into the water.

Market owners bark at each other as they try to lure each other's customers to their own markets. Cats screech as market owners spot them trying to steal whatever they can get their little paws on. The market fills by the minute as

people arrive to do their daily shopping.

In the distance the trees dance in the wind. Birds chirp, chirp, chirp as they spy on the town and gossip. The tree sap gives off a distinct smell. Everything in the town was made by that same forest.

Wind is one of the only things you can hear other than the people yelling orders at the dock. Many of the boats are using the wind to move across the water. Even the birds use the wind to move.

I go down to the water to relax a

bit. The fresh water feels nice this fine morning and the smell it leaves reminds me of rain on a summer day. The fresh water tastes horrible but it feels great to be in the water anyway. This is the town of Natchez and its river.

CALEB C.

3rd Place
Fifth Grade Division
Cedar Ridge Elementary School

The Way of the Flames



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames - Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

Everything was normal, just like every other day. Flowers danced in the wind, and bugs had no care in the world until whoosh, FIRE! Flames engulfed the ground, turning the color of the ground from a luscious green to pitch black. The flames, as red as a stop sign, told others to stop gazing and start running away. Ashes drifted through the sky, blinding birds flying overhead trying to escape the grasp of the wild flames. All the insects and plants cried for help because they were all about to have a very warm death.

One forsaken bush about to get devoured by the fire, prayed for mercy. I watched the flames demolish everything. The fire gazed at me, warning me that it was hungry for more. The smoke smothered my smell as I watched the flames grow tremendous. The flames darted toward the forest about to increase in power more than ever. When the flames reached the forest, it frightened all the unfortunate innocent animals out there.

The sun wasn't helping the fact that there was a rampaging fire on the loose. The fire heated everything, sometimes too much. The fire wouldn't cease and would keep going for as long as it could. The fire made its way towards me. Soon enough it was pursuing me as I ran away not wanting to be its next victim.

AMIRA OLEK

**1st Place
Seventh Grade Division
Langley-Bath-Clearwater Middle School**

A Gift to My Daughters

I planted the trees and watched them grow
as the seasons bloomed and faded
And one freezing winter
As the trees grew unaided
My daughter came at first snow

I planted the trees and watched them thrive
And more daughters joined my wife and me
She taught them to sing
and they danced so regally
that they made the whole world feel alive

I planted the trees and watched them flourish
And now they are fully grown
But I grow old and crippled
Sitting inside my home
Thinking of my final wish

My hands, old and gnarled
Sculpt the clay
And feed the fire
And mix the paint
And for the first time in years
They do not shake

I planted the trees and am buried beneath them
Where my daughters used to dance
And my spirit follows them
As I have joined my wife in death
And every day I look upon my daughters
As in their hands they hold
My final gift
My final wish
An urn filled with all my love



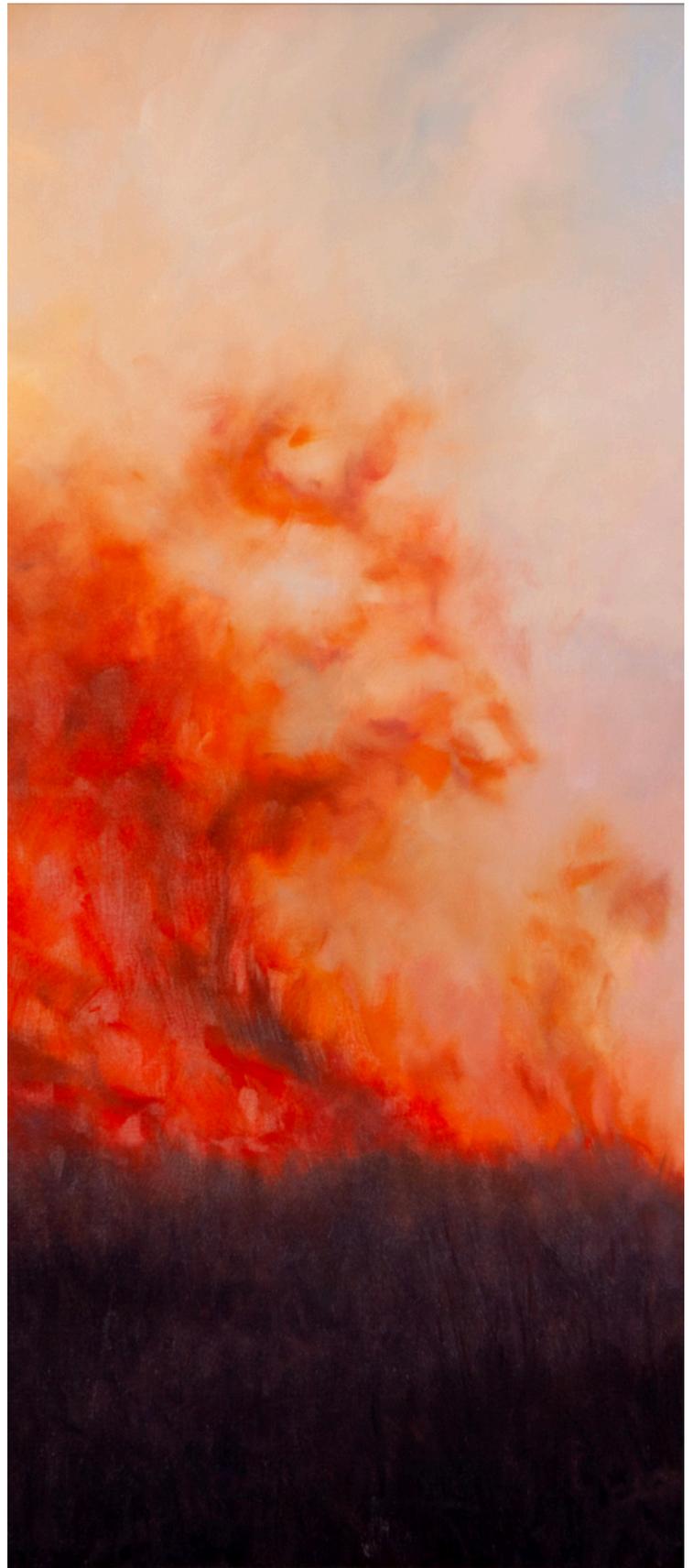
Duncan McClellan, *Vase*, late 20th century/early 21st century. Blown, layered, and sandblasted glass. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Eugene Fleischer.

JEREMY WILLIAMS

2nd Place
Seventh Grade Division
New Ellenton Middle STEAM Magnet School

Fighting for Freedom

As Tim and John watch the land burn, they think about all the hardships, anger, and sadness they have gone through together. The middle of the forest used to be lively with green plants, birds, and animals. Now all that is left is ash and flames, it is hard to breathe and see because of the smoke. All they can think of is how they felt during the battle, sad, angry, upset, enraged, scared, confused. They fight for freedom and rights and at last, the war ends. The other team surrenders and raises their white flag. They should be happy, but they are not and can only think of their fallen comrades that fought for freedom, as their names will go down in history.



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

KHLOE DENT

1st Place
Ninth Grade Division
Harlem High School

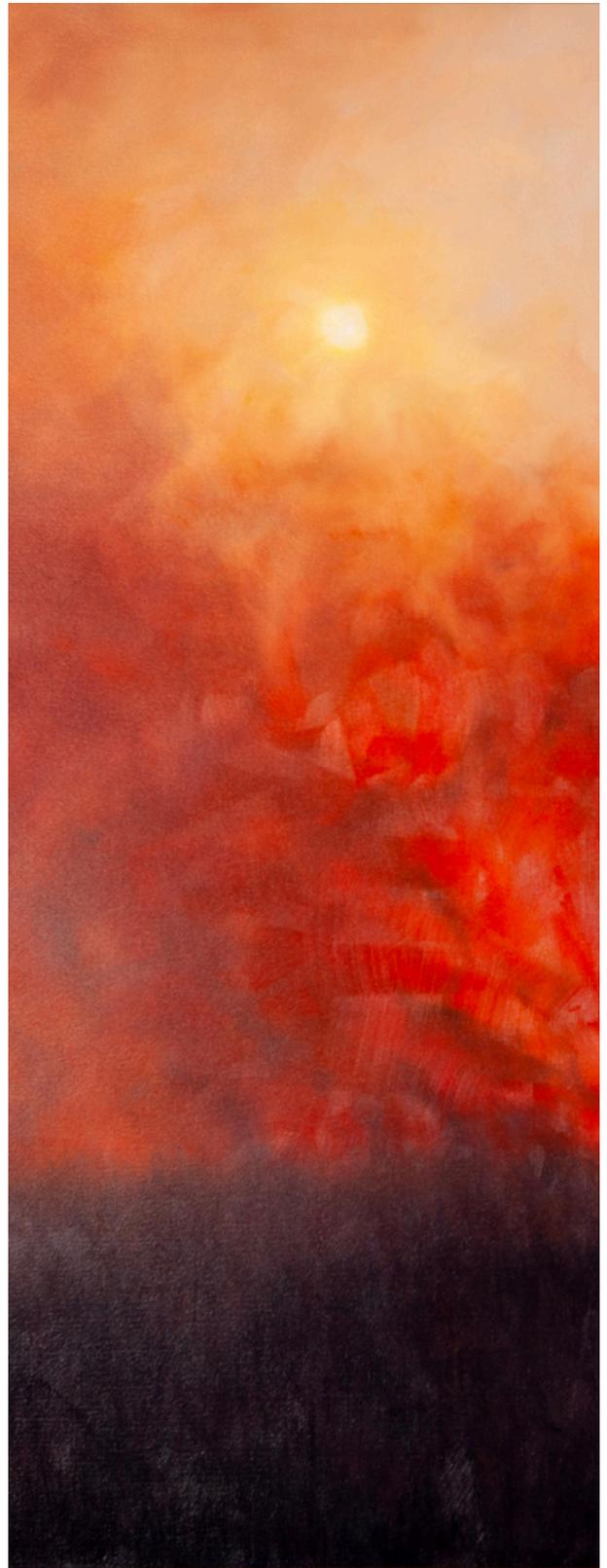
Losing Control

The sun was still rising when the fire was set
I dropped a match on the grass while it was still cold and wet
My eyes watch a tiny fire grow into a field of flames
I blink and nothing remains

The fire rode the wind like a surfer
The heat burned my eyes until everything was a blur
Tears streamed down my face
My thumbs wiped them away, making sure to leave no trace

The wind-driven flames dance and sway
A fiery display that lights up the day
Painting the sky in hues of red and gold
Nature's artwork, a sight to behold

The winds became harsher and the flames danced in the air
I couldn't stop it, my body stood there
A fire in my control slowly strayed away
So I ran, because I knew I couldn't stay



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

KEYDEN HANNA

2nd Place
Ninth Grade Division
Westminster Schools of Augusta

The Family Portrait



Pamela Vinton Ravenel, *Georgia Crackers (detail)*, circa 1935. Oil on canvas.
Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.

Please don't have a bad attitude today," Scarlett begged.

"I have never had a bad attitude," replied Jack.

Scarlett sighed. Jack never listened to her when they talked about her family. Ever since they got married, Scarlett's dad, Joe, despised Jack and Jack despised Joe. Then there was Uncle Tom who was always grouchy and as stubborn as a donkey.

"Just don't make faces, please."

Jack rolled his eyes and took Scarlett's hands.

"Fine. I promise to have a good attitude and not to make faces as long as you promise to never do a family portrait again."

When Jack found out that Scarlett signed them up for a family portrait, he was furious. Scarlett apologized over and over. Eventually, Jack finally got over it.

"We have to get going or we're going to be late," Scarlett said as she checked her hair one last time in the mirror.

"Let's go," said Jack reluctantly. They got into the car and headed to the farm where they were doing the portrait.

Twenty minutes later, they arrived at the farm and Scarlett immediately spotted her father. She jumped out of the car and immediately ran to give him a hug.

"Hello, darling. How are you?" asked Joe.

"I'm great!" exclaimed Scarlett. By this time Jack had walked up. Joe's voice tightened as he said, "Hello, Jack."

Scarlett held her breath waiting for Jack's answer.

He smiled and said, "Hello Joe. How are you doing?"

Joe's eyes shot up in surprise. "I'm doing fine."

Before Jack could respond a very familiar voice said, "Well looky there! Is that you Scarlett?"

"Uncle Tom! You made it right on time!"

"Well, I didn't have a choice." Scarlett rolled her eyes.

After a few minutes of talking and catching up, the family was led over to a beautiful tree. The painter instructed Scarlett to lean on a green chair. Her father stood beside her, Jack on his right, and of course, Uncle Tom in the back.

“Alright everyone stand still but you are allowed to talk,” the painter instructed.

“Scarlett, how’s your new job at the diner?” asked Joe.

“It’s great. Jack comes and eats lunch with me every day,” Scarlett said excitedly.

“Good for you honey. Jack, have you started hunting yet?” Jack choked, covering it up with a cough.

“I actually went yesterday morning but didn’t see any deer.”

“Oh, too bad. Maybe you’ll get them next time.” Just for a second Scarlett thought she saw a hint of a smile on her dad’s face. Jack winked at her.

A few hours later, they finished their portrait.

“How fun was that?” Scarlett asked.

“So fun,” replied Jack sarcastically.

“I’ll admit I actually enjoyed it,” said Joe.

Scarlett and Jack exchanged smiles.

“I’m glad you had a good time Father. Maybe we can do another portrait sometime?”

“No!” Joe, Jack, and Uncle Tom all said in unison.

“Ok, ok.” Scarlett smiled. They reached their cars and started to say their goodbyes.

“Bye Father, see you soon.”

“Bye darling.”

“Bye Jack,” said Joe as he shook his hand.

“Goodbye Joe. I really enjoyed talking to you.” Joe offered him a smile and got into his car.

Scarlett and Jack headed towards their car.

“Good bye Uncle Tom!”

“Bye.” Jack and Scarlett laughed. On the way home, they held hands and laughed the whole time.

“I’m really proud of you,” said Scarlett.

“I’m glad you corrected me. I learned a lot about your father,” Jack smiled. Scarlett laid her head on his shoulder and smiled as she thought about the exciting adventures ahead with her new, happy family.

KILEY MATTOX

3rd Place
Ninth Grade Division
Harlem High School

Forest in Flames

It was a day like no other, I was swinging through the trees with my brother
It was a hot day, the sun came out with no delay.
We love our home, despite the hot summer days, but on this particular day, I was amazed
Not in a good way, because of the horrible destruction of our home today
Our home in the forest went up in flames, and the people made their claims
They say it was to help, but I couldn't help but yelp
I sat on the grass while I watched my forest home go up in flames, I didn't want to hear their proclaims
As I stayed on the grass, I just hoped that it would pass
This day was a terrible day, watching my home go up in flames
At this moment I knew, those days of me and my brothers swinging through the trees, oh those days flew by like
a breeze
So as I look at this scene, of my home in flames, I hope I will find a home again



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

XAVIER BRISSON

1st Place
Tenth Grade Division
Aquinas High School

Spark and Flame

It starts from a spark
And continues to grow.
I hear people hark
But I am too far down low.

Like a roaring flame
My anger does grow.
But how can I tame
All this pain, like a foe.

Little by little
I add to the fire.
And little by little
I feel hate and desire.

Like an unhinged beast
It releases its wrath.
But until it is ceased
I follow the wrong path.

With the flame at its peak
I turn to my friends.
All the destruction it has wreaked
I stop to make amends.

The cool touch of water
Helps control the blazing inferno.
My mind fights harder
To get out of the burrow.

With a breeze and a spark,
Will my anger ever end?
I will use my fresh start
To put an end to this trend.



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames- Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas.

Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.
Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

WILLIAM STIFTER

2nd Place
Tenth Grade Division
Aquinas High School

The River

Upon a river where beauty roams,
A group of men row their boat into the unknown,
A southern stream of which men dream.

Water drenched clothes in the hot Mississippi day,
Seeking the promise of a new life that is far away.
Men who left their past lives behind,
Seek new lands, and a future to find.

The wooden craft is on a westward quest,
And these men will have no rest.
Each stroke of an oar testing their power,
These men will not stop till it is their hour.
They row to their future although obscure,
The river provides a path that is pure.
They yearn for a land of fertile space,
Although this journey may be small,
These men are surely going to find their place.



Louis Joseph Bahin, *Natchez under the Hill* (detail), 1852. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.

ROBBY SABALLA

3rd Place
Tenth Grade Division
Harlem High School

The Hill of Mystery

Four children were laughing as they played in the field of the calm, green grass. It was a quiet evening, which was unusual since they weren't really far from the city. One boy, James, remained curious about the situation. His friend, Rowan, walked up to him as James watched the hill that separated them and the city.

"Hey man!" Rowan said. James turned around and smiled.

"Yo, what's up? I thought you were getting your butt beat by Tess."

Rowan snickered. "What makes you think that? Just because I lost in an arm wrestle, doesn't mean I'm nothing, stupid."

As he finished, Tess came up from behind and smacked him in the head. She laughed. "Got you, pino!"

Rowan turned around and chased her as she ducked around trees and rocks. James laughed as Tess tripped and got her face covered in dust.

"Hey."



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

Surprised, James turned around. He saw Brielle as she stood behind him. He was shocked as to why he didn't notice her.

"How—" he started to ask, but she shushed him.

"Look at the sky, James," she said. She had a concerned look on her face. "The sky is changing color."

James looked in the sky and shrugged. "I don't see anything. Are your eyes fine?"

"Yes, I know they're fine. Just look at the sk—" she sighed. "I just—I feel like something is going to happen. It feels like butterflies in my stomach whenever I'm going up for a presentation or something. But I don't know why. Nothing's happening later today that would make me feel so worried."

She looked over the hill. "It's been going on since last week, never-ending. And now, it's at its worst. It's starting to hurt."

James looked down on her, worried for what was about to happen too. Apparently, he also had

butterflies. He just got them two days ago. It wasn't bothering him then, but just now, it got worse.

"Let's go back," he said. "I'll get the other two."

Brielle nodded and started walking up the hill, clutching her stomach. James took one more glance, then ran to get Tess and Rowan. He found them on the ground, a couple of feet away from each other.

"Hey!" James shouted. "Get up. Brielle and I are going back, you guys should come along."

Rowan moaned in pain as Tess giggled. Two seconds later, she too groveled in pain.

Sigh, James thought. They really love fighting each other to the death.

As he helped Tess up from the dirt, he heard a scream. The other two heard it too. The four of them piled themselves together right away and ran to the foot of the hill but James stopped.

"What are you doing?" Rowan asked. "We gotta help her!"

"No. Something's wrong. I can feel it. Something bad is going to happen. Something we don't wanna get caught in."

He looked toward the hill. Clouds of red floated above it. It almost looked like a fire. Was this what Brielle was talking about?

James thought, "Just over it is the city right? Right? Why do I feel like something really bad is going to happen?! It's making me go crazy!"

James stared at the top of the hill. He stared hard and noticed a bush he had never seen before. He knew if he went over that hill, there was a 100% chance he would die. He didn't know how or why, but there was something that was telling him to not go up that hill. No matter what. James started shaking.

Another scream. Rowan and Tess looked at each other, not knowing what to do. Finally, Rowan squeezed his eyes shut and ran towards the top of the hill. Of course he didn't know. If he did, he wouldn't have done it.

As he reached the top, Brielle popped out of nowhere.

"NO!" she screamed. She looked at James. Then Tess. Then up at Rowan. Her face became shrouded with despair.

"ROWAN!" she called. Desperately. She knew what was going to happen. "GET AWAY FROM THERE!"

Rowan stopped at the top, just listening to Brielle's warning. But what he saw took his attention even more. No one knew what he saw. No one knew what was happening on the other side of the hill. But when he turned around, he looked like he saw death. It was like he knew death was hovering over him, waiting to take his life. He started crying.

"Help me," he said. "Please." And at that moment, he toppled over. Nothing hit him, he just fell over.

Tess screamed as James ran to Rowan's body as it rolled down the hill. He took the corpse and looked at Rowan's eyes. His dark, lifeless eyes. He was dead.

HALEIGH WILLIS

1st Place
Eleventh Grade Division
Harlem High School

The Blazing Scarlet Fog

Invisible shackles to control my glory—
I rise to the occasion
And spread my mist blissfully
I am the sun on Earth
Everyone knows my name
When they see me
And when I am close enough to embrace
They know their time is soon to be up
Destroying everything in my wake:
The trees
Bushes and
Burrows
They are all homes;
I yearn to reach the sky
But my pathway is soon to be met
By the tears from the skies—the tears I wish I could cry
I once believed that I was unstoppable
The path behind me would devastatingly concur
Alas,
I,
The controller,
Have become the controlled



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (details)*, 2022. Oil on canvas.
Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia.
Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

CHARLOTTE SYRING

2nd Place
Eleventh Grade Division
North Augusta High School



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

Fighting the Flame

Never before have I seen this,
Flames hundreds of feet tall,
right in front of my very eyes.

I watched as the blaze grew,
traveling across the field,
getting closer and closer to me.

Without a second's more hesitation,
I ran to the water,
Prepared for a moment like this there was a fire hose
waiting for me there.

Not really knowing what I was doing,
The hose started gushing water everywhere,
but not at the fire.

That's when the panic set in,
maybe I couldn't save my home,
the home that had been in my family for generations.

No,
I will save this house,
even if it's the last thing I ever did.
Taking a deep breath,
Looking at the flames,
I aimed the hose and let loose.

The flames started dying,
slowly at first,
then faster and faster.

Once the flames were gone,
I put down the hose with a sigh,
but my relief was short lived.

Turning around,
There were floating shapes surrounding me,
ghost-like shapes.

Looking at the closest one,
I recognized her,
it was my beloved wife who died a few years ago.

She looked at me with a smile upon her face,
"Its time to go my love" she said,
and we floated off to spend eternity together.

"Hey over here!" a fireman yelled,
he found the body of the brave old man,
the one who sadly lost his life fighting the fire.

The house had burned down,
just like many others in the area,
but the old man managed to put out the fire.

AMBER NORRIS

**3rd Place
Eleventh Grade Division
North Augusta High School**

Wind in Her Hair

Standing with my face
away from the base
of the fire,
I stared into the distance,
dark and mysterious
In my head I could feel
the heat rising a great deal
though I
didn't dare to look back, no
The smell
of smoke, I could tell
was getting stronger and thicker
closer
I stood still



Philip Juras, *Wind Driven Flames—Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail)*, 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

ALEXIS GILLEY

1st Place
Twelfth Grade Division
Harlem High School

Midnight Vase

Voices trickle through my ears as we dance among the trees
Song and laughter fill the sky as leaves flutter in the breeze

Moonlight illuminates our dancing in the night
Our movements are graceful and our souls, pure and bright

Butterflies frolic with us as we dance the night away
With nothing to celebrate, among the trees we sway



Duncan McClellan, *Vase*, late 20th century/early 21st century. Blown, layered, and sandblasted glass. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Eugene Fleischer.



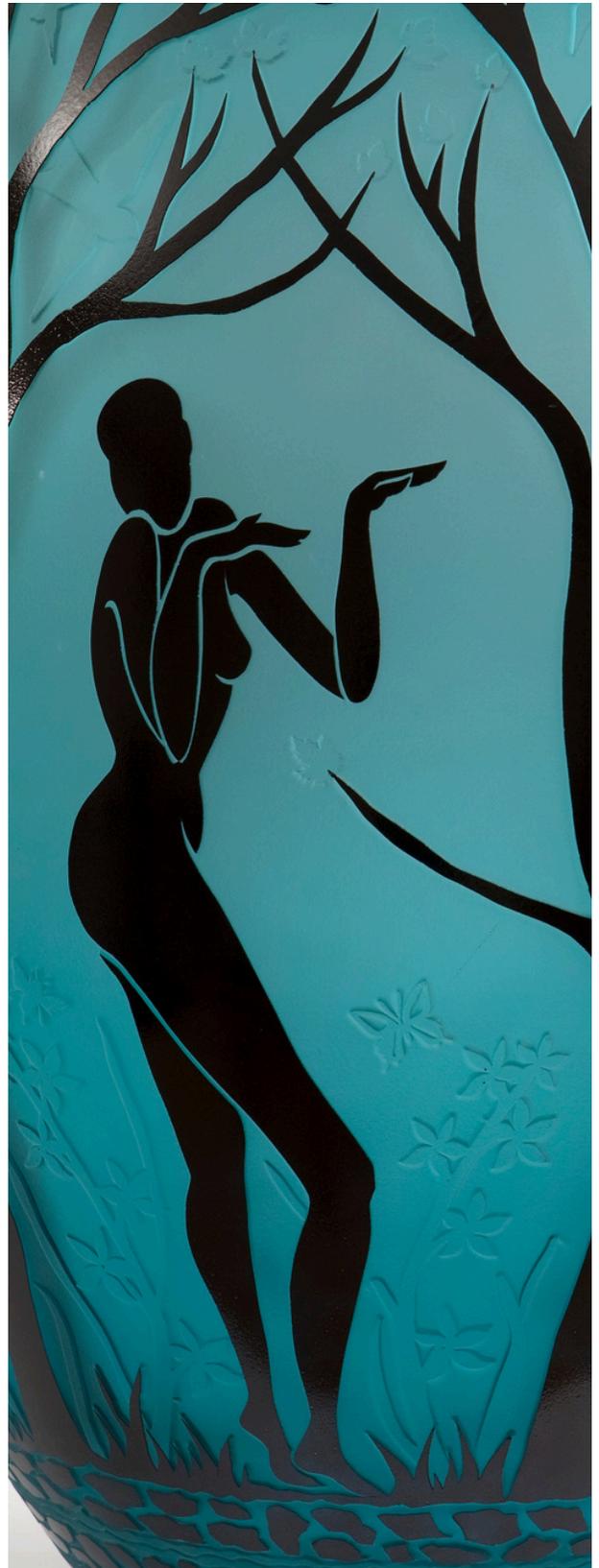
Duncan McClellan, *Vase (detail)*, late 20th century/early 21st century. Blown, layered, and sandblasted glass. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Eugene Fleischer.

KYRA WRIGHT

2nd Place
Twelfth Grade Division
Harlem High School

A Woman's Paradise

In the midst of night, femininity floats in the air
A woman's paradise, beautifully flowing hair
Cover of the evening is what peace brings
Until the morning she will hear the nightingale sing
Hues of blue wrap the dark night sky
The motion of dancing freely waiting for the moment we lie
Giggles of happiness, leaving our chest unconditionally bare
In a man's world the sight would not be fair
A woman's paradise is within reach
Only up to her if you can reach the peak



Duncan McClellan, *Vase (detail)*, late 20th century/early 21st century. Blown, layered, and sandblasted glass. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Eugene Fleischer.

CIERA BRAKEFIELD

3rd Place
Twelfth Grade Division
Harlem High School

Avenge



Philip Juras, Wind Driven Flames —Little St. Simons Island, Georgia (detail), 2022. Oil on canvas. Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia. Gift of Shauna and James Muhl. Courtesy of Philip Juras.

I watched as the embers of my rage and grief flame the air.

My people run for their lives as my deep rooted rage arrives to wreak havoc.

Their horrified screams pleasurable music to my ears.

A girl's best friend, Chaos was.

As it was always there when I needed it the most

Witnessing the agony and the petrified screams of prayers, the scene forcibly takes me to the memory I bury the most.

The day when my world was carelessly destroyed.

The day my other half was cruelly taken from this abysmal world.

I could still feel his inviting arms delicately caress my back,

And whiff his masculine scent of cinnamon spice that drove me crazy.

Seeing the life drain from his hazel eyes haunts me like no other, yet his last words plague me like an incurable disease.

“My love, Avenge me. Show them that our love knows no bounds and that nothing could ever rid the passion that creates our souls. Show them the cruelty they carelessly showed me. Burn their world down into crisp nothingness like they did you.”

So I did, as I am a woman of my word.

I look to the sky, a sardonic smile engraved on my lips.

Tears stream down my face, as I mouth,

“This is for you, My love.”

The love of my life.

From the Morris



photo by Brent Cline

On behalf of the Morris Museum of Art, we extend our deepest gratitude to all the talented students who submitted their poetry and short stories to the 2023–2024 Combining Voices Literary Competition. Your creativity and passion for the arts continue to inspire us and enrich our community.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to Dr. Rebecca Harper and the Augusta University Writing Project for graciously dedicating their time and expertise to judge the submissions. Your

commitment to fostering literary talent and promoting the arts is invaluable, and we are truly grateful for your involvement in Combining Voices.

Additionally, we extend a special thank-you to all the teachers and parents who have nurtured and encouraged their students' creativity and learning. Your support is fundamental in cultivating a love for the arts and empowering young minds to express themselves through writing.

The dedication and enthusiasm shown by each participant, judge, teacher, and parent are what make events like this possible and meaningful. Thank you for being an essential part of our community and for helping to make this competition a success.

We look forward to continuing to celebrate and showcase the artistic talents of our youth in the future.

Kevin Grogan
DIRECTOR OF
THE MORRIS MUSEUM OF ART

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