BREAKING BARRIERS

GATHERING LIGHT

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BREAKING BARRIERS 2025

INTRODUCTION

Breaking Barriers: Gathering Light brings together photographs produced during the 2025 Breaking Barriers workshops. The exhibition considers the many ways participants encountered light, positioning it as both the material foundation of photography and a conceptual framework for understanding perception, resilience, connection, and community. The images invite viewers to look with intention and to consider how seeing and sharing can enable deeper understanding.

This year marked my first as Program Director of Breaking Barriers, shaped by continuity as much as change. The program's strength is rooted in the preceding leadership of Leslie Elsasser and Noel Smith, whose work established a framework grounded in trust, care, and sustained engagement. What I encountered was not simply a workshop, but a community that understands artistic practice as shared and relational.

Breaking Barriers creates conditions in which photography becomes a vehicle for connection. The medium offers both structure and openness, encouraging experimentation without fear of error. Within this environment, uncertainty becomes generative, enabling participants to articulate experience through images, conversations, and collective presence.

The workshops fostered not only technical development, but a shared sensibility grounded in attentiveness and mutual respect. The photographs presented in this catalogue are individual works and records of dialogue and experimentation. They reflect an expanded understanding of light as something gathered, shaped through interaction, and carried forward through acts of making and sharing.

I extend my gratitude to the participants, whose openness and generosity made this work possible. I also thank the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum team; Program Coordinator Amy Allison; instructors Kristen Roles and Derek Hopkins; Don Fuller and Kenzie Ferrell for design; Eric Jonas, Alejandro Gomez, Madison Andrews, and Gary Schmitt for framing and installation; and Forrest MacDonald and the USF School of Art and Art History for printing. We also acknowledge the USF College of Design, Art and Performance; James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital; USF Office of Veterans Success; and the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners, through the Hillsborough Arts Council.

JENN MILLER
Curator of Education
USF Contemporary Art Museum



Derek Hopkins, *What's Left Behind,* 2025

DEREK HOPKINS

When society pours a large pad of concrete it expands and contracts with the changing of the seasons and the weather. It builds up internal stress that will break apart and fail in just a few short years. To fix this, expansion joints are added to allow a space for movement between these rigid slabs. It's a purposeful break where friction and circumstance can clash without damaging the work at large.

In the hot sun a sidewalk panel swells, crushing or lifting the next one. In freezing temperatures a joint filled with ice creates enormous pressure and tons of concrete can shift or pop out of place. Plants will always reclaim what space is allowed.
A backer rod with its sealant is a compressible foam filler, key to preventing the concrete from destroying itself or nearby structures. It fills the space keeping out water, debris and encroaching nature.
In a large project these are laid quickly and efficiently relative to budget and demands.

Only a small percentage of the sidewalk consists of this, but is essential to keep it functioning for decades.
If your walk of life is a smooth paved surface, remember: it always costs something, sometimes it costs everything and what you get is what's left behind.

DEREK HOPKINS
US Air Force
Breaking Barriers Instructor



Kristen Roles, *We Are Here Now, Here We Are*, 2025

KRISTEN ROLES

Here we are, now, layering our light...

Before and during this session of Breaking Barriers, I have been thinking about structures of institutional power that shape our lives and the intentional communities we form within and in spite of these forces to sustain one another. How can we make art that interrogates these systems while centering the personal, seeking mutable, mutual meaning and even Joy in sharing our paths of survival? I printed this misremembered quote by theorist Fred Moten, *WE ARE HERE NOW, HERE WE ARE*[1] on light-sensitized sand to resituate its context in an ephemeral form, both a call to presence and a reference to the learning and connectivity that we invite by coming together in any classroom (or art space, or Zoom room!) to witness and support each other in the work of expressing our distinct and overlapping stories.

With the goal of using photography as a balm, a window, a prism, a tool for looking with care, this year's remarkable group of veterans and their loved ones showed up to our workshop with courage and curiosity to create exactly this space of supportive witnessing and meaning-making. Each week, they filled our virtual meeting space with their light.

We set out with our phone cameras, these ever-more impressive and automated tools, to elevate the subjects of our everyday environments through tactics of both "hunting" (observing and transforming mundane miracles) and "gathering" (staging scenes for the camera or augmenting the original frames through post-processing).

With playful experimentation as an access point, the artists found reverence in their routines and reached deeply into memory and psyche to reveal that which often goes unseen—the hard-won and universe-gifted moments of peace as well as struggle, the fraught and buttressed histories we contain.

We discovered techniques best fit to surface these undercurrents, harnessing serendipitous and intentional lighting and composition, isolated focus and color, and interventions like layering multiple exposures. Rather than letting the technology dictate the limitations of what we make, we asked what might happen if we let our ideas guide our wielding of the medium. How

[1]Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "The General Antagonism: An Interview with Stevphen Shukaitis," in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013), 126.

can we disrupt the expected ways of maneuvering the tools we have at hand?

The visually impactful and emotionally resonant images you'll discover here reflect a multitude of themes. They call upon reflection itself, refraction, echoing, shifting, and musings on time[2], looking back and looping, making mirrors, honoring legacy and memory, the fruits of nurture, stopping to smell the roses, order and unpredictability, shadow work, dawns and dusks, the messy process of becoming, erecting bridges into inner worlds. Beyond the surface of a sunset, a portrait, a still life or shadow, each of these images vibrates with Feeling.

Photography echoes the slipperiness of other forms of language (and other assumptions of understanding) in a spectacularly humbling way. We may approach the medium to help distill and organize an overwhelming world, to cling to elements of beauty from our past and present, to make our interiority visible. I find that images often fail to contain what I wanted to "capture" while offering something I needed to see. Via happenstance, mediation, and their inevitable subjectivity, the ultimate refusal of images to tell just one fixed truth is a source of their power.

Making photographs is a practice of both holding on and letting go, and I commend this group of artists for their sensitive and masterful embodiment of this challenge. It is with overflowing gratitude and pride that we[3] share these pictures with you.

KRISTEN ROLES
Breaking Barriers Instructor

[2]How do we point to ruptures in its continuity, ask it to slow down–perhaps by inviting others to join us in observing these fleeting moments where we slowed down?

[3]This year's coalescence of brave, thoughtful, & visually keen veteran-artists (and their support systems) could not have happened without Assistant Instructor Derek Hopkins's candor, humor, and intersection of military & artistic community-mindedness; Program Coordinator Amy Allison's warmth, patience, administrative prowess and "veteran" experience with this workshop, and Curator of Education Jenn Miller's enthusiasm, encouragement, and brilliant insight throughout our sessions. THANK YOU to all our wonderful participants and CAM & VA teams.

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CHRISTOPHER ALGARIN

★ US MARINE CORPS

Finding Me

I look at this image and I see a child that lost his character. You can see in the eyes. And I see a man who is simply trying to rebuild himself from the trials and tribulations of a hard life. I also see the reflection of a beautiful sky in the glass of the old framed window representing beautiful days ahead.

Finding a sense of self takes time and effort. To truly grow, you need to put yourself on the right path and stay there. Most of us rarely pause to see what we've already overcome—those challenges that shaped us into who we are today.

This isn't about your job or what you do for others; it's about who you really are. Have you quit drinking or using drugs? Have you stopped seeing yourself as someone you're not? Every step you've taken matters.

Take a moment to reflect on what it took to become the person you are now. From here, you can continue working toward the version of yourself that is strong, resilient, and triumphant in everything you do.

Remove the word "can't" from your vocabulary when it comes to your dreams, your skills, and your heart. Believe in yourself—and do you, fully, and learn to respect yourself.

Christopher Algarin, *Finding Me,* 2025



MANFREDO BOBADILLA

★ US ARMY

Shadow Work

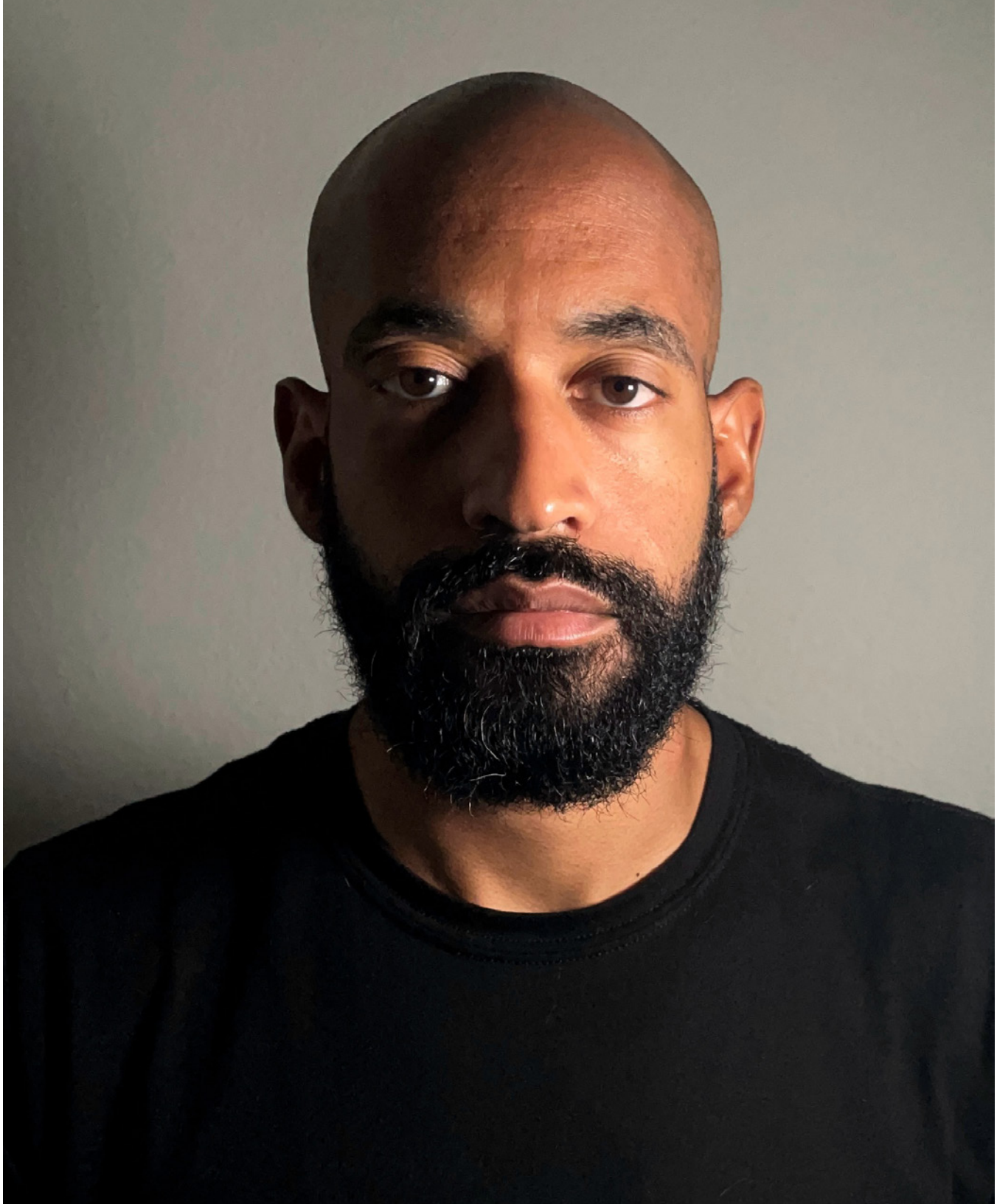
As I entered my 30s, I knew something was going to be different. This decade of life meant that I have experienced enough to know who I am, how I can be around certain people, and most importantly how I can be to myself. I wanted to mark this new chapter with a change, so I decided to go bald.

Going bald to me meant more than just a hair change, it was the symbolic change of letting go of something to embrace a new beginning. New beginnings require reflection of the past. Reflection meant revealing everything, the joys, the sorrows and the in-betweens moments that make me the person I am today. He is better than the one I was yesterday, but I have more work to do.

Today, my shadow is one that acts out of character, looks for approval of others and changes behaviors, only to feel guilt and shame after doing so. That shadow is filled with moments I regret, opportunities I let go of, and things I've said that I wished I didn't, or many I wish I did. These insecurities need to be acknowledged, instead of buried deeper.

So, as I stare at myself and my shadow, I shed light to everything, the thrills, shame and regrets. I shed light to all the things that make me who I am, revealing myself to others, to better myself. I shed light and acknowledge everything about me, to become the best, unapologetic version of myself.

Manfredo Bobadilla, *Shadow Work*, 2025



DAVID BRYANT

★ US ARMY

Distractions

David Bryant, *Distractions*, 2025



LUIS E. CARRASCO JR.

★ US MARINE CORPS

Freedom

When I created this photograph, I wanted to express the meaning of freedom. Freedom can be interpreted in many ways. As a Veteran dealing with chronic pain for many years, this is a representation of escaping from my pain and the negative impact that has affected me throughout my life.

Luis E. Carrasco Jr., *Freedom*, 2025



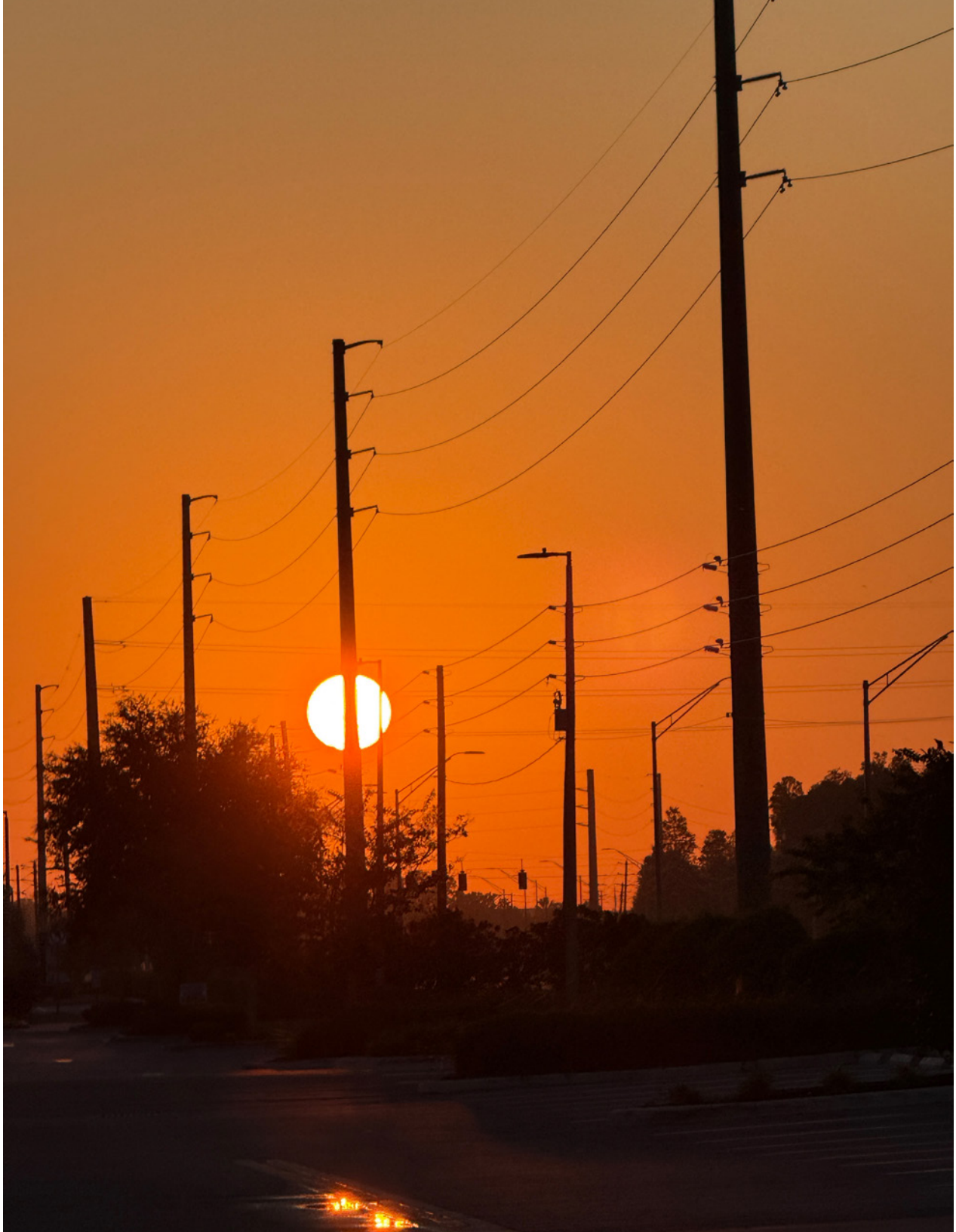
PATRICIA A. COLBERT

★ US ARMY

An Unexpected Pit Stop

Traveling home after an overnight medical appointment, I got the glimpse of majestic radiance dancing around in my rearview mirror. I struggled, but I was unable to get the full impact of the beauty behind me. Truly, it was impossible to grasp the full essence of what was beaming radiantly behind me. Curiosity burned inside of me. So a quick survey of the area revealed an upcoming gas station, with a clear line-of-sight to the sun rising behind me. As my car came to a safe stop, I jumped out of the car with my camera in tow. Time stood still, as I gazed at the dawning of a new day. Mother Nature was rising and taking her place in a new day. I was capturing that moment for now and for the future. Mother Nature had started to shine and to send warmth over the day. Her wake-up was majestic and breathtaking, and yet she would do a repeat performance on subsequent days. I smiled, and thanked Mother Nature for one more new day.

Patricia A. Colbert, *An Unexpected Pit Stop*, 2025



DIANA COLON

★ US AIR FORCE

Thriving

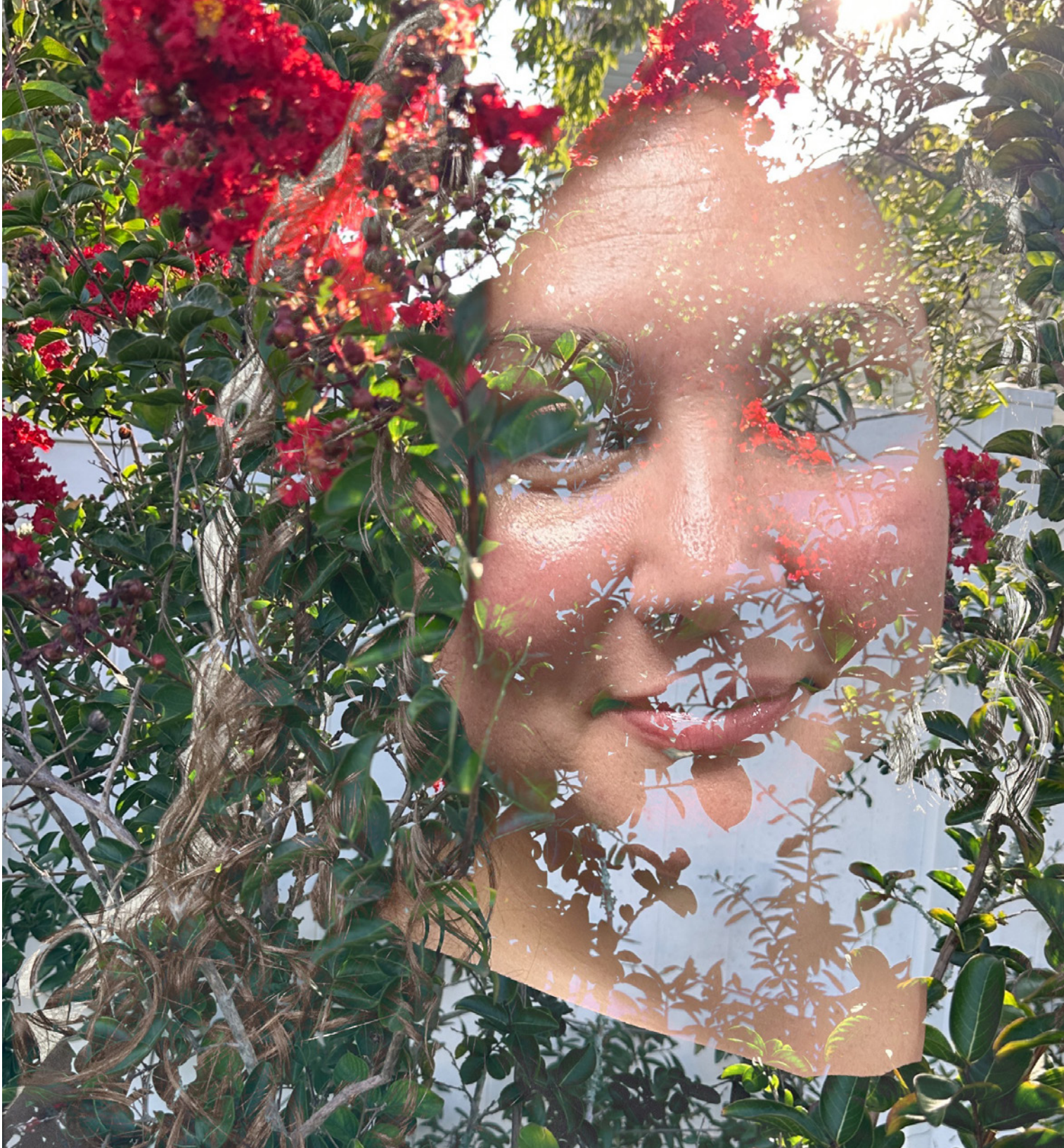
In this piece, I used post-processing techniques to layer two photographs, adjusting exposure to blend them into a single image. As I worked, I found a point where the flowering crepe myrtle seemed to intertwine with my hair and facial features, merging me with the bright sky and the fence behind me.

What we don't see in the final image is the care that went into nurturing these plants—the planting, the pruning, the dirt in the fingernails; or the surrounding plants that didn't survive because they were placed in the wrong environment. A plant can struggle endlessly, but if the environment isn't right, it will wither. The same is true for us. When I place myself in the right surroundings—where my values, positivity, and joy can take root—I flourish, much like this crepe myrtle which symbolizes love, beauty, purity and joy.

In this image, we witness budding and growth, the plant becoming part of my hair, like a vine that guides the viewer's eye upward toward the sunlit sky and downward toward the greenery against the white fence. The eyes, often called the windows to the soul, invite us to see, to envision, to remember: what can be, what is, and what once was. To learn as we grow.

When we find the right environment—one that nourishes rather than drains us—we don't just survive. We thrive.

Diana Colon, *Thriving*, 2025



GAIL CROSS

★ US AIR FORCE

Pumpkin Spice

My face hovers over a glowing pumpkin vessel, I look like half scientist, half sorcerer. Pale, cat-eye glasses studded with tiny constellations frame my intent eyes, their reflection swimming in a molten spiced amber pool below. The glass pumpkin catches the light like captured fire, flecked with sparks and floating embers, as if something ancient is being coaxed awake. Warm spicy reds and oranges blur together, heat and curiosity mingling in the air. It feels like a moment just before a transformation, breath held, spell nearly spoken.

Gail Cross, *Pumpkin Spice*, 2025



BERNADETTE DUNN

★ US AIR FORCE

Red Sphere Illusion

Bernadette "Bernie" Dunn's photography explores quiet, often overlooked moments where barriers begin to soften, shift, or dissolve. Informed by her lived experience as a U.S. Air Force veteran, her work examines the intersections of identity, perception, and experience, particularly within spaces shaped by transition, resilience, and self-discovery.

Developed through the Breaking Barriers program, this body of work reflects an intentional inquiry into limits that are often unconsciously accepted—personal, cultural, emotional, and creative. Rather than focusing on resolution, Dunn is drawn to moments of transition: subtle gestures, shifts in light, and compositions that suggest movement and change. These images hold space for what is unresolved, inviting reflection rather than conclusion.

Working primarily with natural light, texture, and careful framing, Dunn favors honesty over perfection. Her photographs feel lived-in, emphasizing presence and vulnerability as sources of strength. Photography functions for her as both observation and participation, using the camera as a tool of inquiry rather than control.

This work represents an ongoing practice of breaking internal and external barriers—between artist and subject, between viewer and image, and between what is seen and what is felt. By resisting easy answers, Dunn's photographs create space for dialogue, awareness, and possibility.

Bernadette Dunn, *Red Sphere Illusion*, 2025


MYFLORIDA.COM
SUNSHINE STATE

MICHAEL E. DUNSON JR.

★ US ARMY

Webs Woven, Forward

What began as rehabilitation became something unexpected: a meditative practice that offered peace and focus in the work of rebuilding.

My injury disrupted both visual, verbal, and spatial processing. The act of seeing was something I had to learn to enjoy again—noticing light, framing a moment, observing relationships between elements. I had to rebuild how I view the world, and my lens became the tool for that reconstruction. Breaking Barriers provided a framework I could anchor to: technical elements, the physics of light, and principles of composition. Photography gave me a way to re-engage with the world, working with my altered brain rather than against it.

I work primarily with available light in landscapes, everyday objects, and immediate environments. These constraints align with my cognitive reality while shaping how I see. The limitations became parameters, not problems. Often, I discover the most meaningful elements in my images only after capture—patterns and metaphors invisible in the moment. I learn to trust my instincts again, discovering through review and reflection why I was drawn to capture an image.

This approach allows me to move forward rather than remain fixed on who I was before. Photography accommodates who I am now, transforming what I cannot change into ongoing discovery. The obstacles I would never choose have opened pathways I might never have found.

Through Breaking Barriers, I have found not just technical skills, but a sustainable practice that creates purpose from constraint. The work continues—for me, and for my photography.

Michael E. Dunson Jr., *Webs Woven, Forward*, 2025



SHA'NA FOLKS

★ DAUGHTER OF US ARMY VETERAN

The House Always Shifts

The House Always Shifts explores the complicated relationship between control, chance, and the narratives we construct around both. In this photograph, the falling or scattered playing cards create a sense of movement frozen in time—an instant where order collapses into unpredictability. I was drawn to the way the heart suit dominates the composition, symbolizing emotional stakes and the risks we take in our personal lives. The presence of the joker adds an element of unpredictability; it functions as both a wildcard and a reminder that not everything in life plays by the rules we expect.

The soft, almost dreamlike texture of the image pushes the scene beyond literal documentation. Instead, it suggests memory—blurred at the edges, imperfect, shaped by feeling rather than fact. I wanted the viewer to feel the tension between what we try to control and what inevitably slips out of our hands. The cards appear mid-motion, as if caught between falling apart and falling into place, mirroring the moments where life feels equally uncertain.

This work reflects my interest in using everyday objects to tell emotional stories. By presenting something familiar in an unfamiliar way, I aim to create space for viewers to confront their own interpretations of risk, luck, and agency. Ultimately, the photograph is less about gambling and more about the unpredictable shape of human experience.

Sha'na Folks, ***The House Always Shifts***, 2025



EVAN FOUNTAIN

★ US AIR FORCE

The Narrowing Gyre

I came to Tampa to try and build a life, and for a time I did. I looped around the Hillsborough/Pinellas areas, spiraling out and around as the red tailed hawks that are so common in the area do.

I moved to Tampa while in the USAF, the first place I laid my head was in Lutz. Approximately 15 or so years after that, I ended up a little less than a mile from that same house with this spiral staircase leading to my room. The first place I was in was normal, safe, boring with its simplicity. The last place I was in, with the staircase, was vibrant with life, strange, interesting, and weirdly beautiful, especially late at night after the world had started to shut down.

Tampa, and the surroundings, were a place of growth for me. Over time I was able to shed much of what no longer worked for my life and myself. I climbed higher and higher, spiraling up like a hawk riding a thermal.

Special thanks to Karen S, the owner of The Treehouse, for allowing me my time there.

Evan Fountain, *The Narrowing Gyre*, 2025

PAUL HALL

★ US ARMY MEDIC

O Fortunada Never Ends

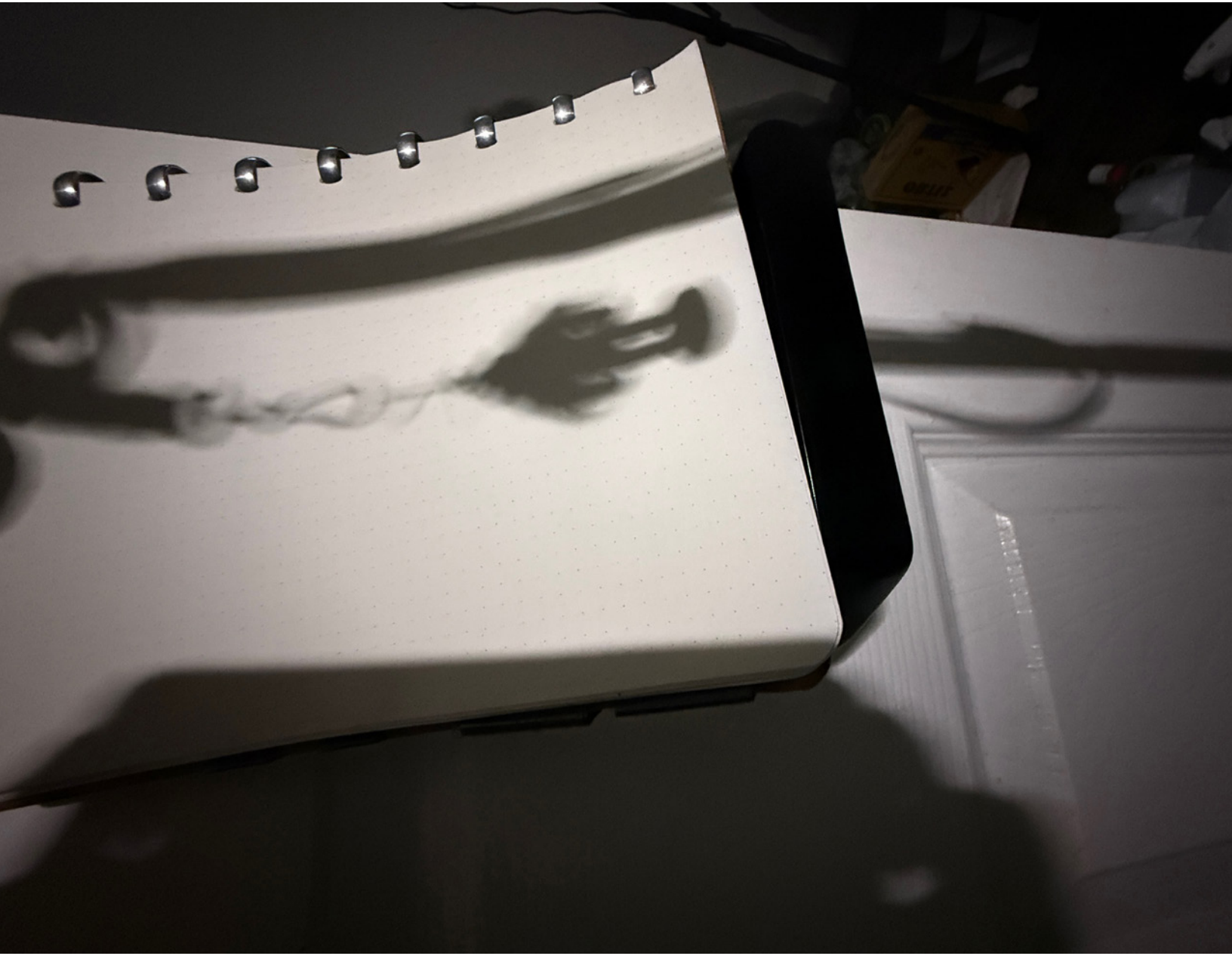
We're off on our journey with a bang!

And, then on to the cantina with the Goliards before "Orff's cantata" plays.

The "highs and lows" to the show that never ends. And still yet another show begins...

For Eileen and Paul, Jessica and Robert

Paul Hall, *O Fortunada Never Ends*, 2025



EDITHA PEREZ HEBERLEIN

★ US AIR FORCE

Glow and Shadow

The subject is made from a single sheet of stamped aluminum, artfully shaped into a stand-alone figure. Artificial light was used to accentuate and create perception of depth and dimension. The twist of the stem, the fold of the leaves, and shape of the petals enhanced the glow of the light source and cast the distinct shadow. The Glow represents the warmth of friendships we make along the path of life. The Shadow signifies looking back on fond memories created by these special friendships. This metal artwork was a 4th of July gift from a musician friend from Stuttgart, Germany.

Editha Perez Heberlein, *Glow and Shadow*, 2025


7.4.

ROGER C. HEBERLEIN

★ US ARMY

The Simple Beauty of Colored Glass

The photo was taken using a Samsung Galaxy cell phone. I used two frosted flood lamps placed under and outside the tabletop to illuminate the glass containers All objects are from our home that we have collected from around the world. The more delicate pieces are hand-blown perfume containers from Tunisia. The other pieces have come from various western European countries. I have tried to illustrate the simple beauty of color passing through the various pieces. Stained glass windows are often seen in churches to tell a story and put the viewer in a state of quite reflection and peace.

Roger C. Heberlein, *The Simple Beauty of Colored Glass*, 2025



VALERIE LARSON

★ US AIR FORCE

Missing Pieces

This year has been an unexpectedly difficult one for me—five new diagnoses, constant appointments, and a calendar filled with reminders of what my body is struggling to handle. With each visit, each medication, each new label, it has felt as though another small piece of me slips away.

There are days when the exhaustion makes me want to cry. And yet, I smile. I show up. I keep moving.

This image reflects that quiet fight—the parts of me that feel lost, and the strength that remains.

Valerie Larson, *Missing Pieces*, 2025



JOHN LEDUC

★ US ARMY

Night Flight

Two MH47G heavy lift helicopters from the 160th SOAR(A) are superimposed with the full moon and indicates the merging of machine and the night. They are considered the premier night flying unit in the US military. The MH47G heavy lift helicopter is the most technologically advanced helicopter enabling the crew to fly at night in all weather conditions and terrain.

John Leduc, *Night Flight*, 2025



KEVIN GUY LIPTON

★ US ARMY

Watering Hole (Diptych)

A reflection on the quiet intersections of time and place—where what once was and what now is coexist in the same golden light. I invite the viewer to linger, to sense continuity rather than contrast between the natural and the human-made.

Like a watering hole drawing life to its edge, these spaces offer a moment of stillness and connection—a pause to gather, to breathe, to remember that all things, old and new, share the same light.

Kevin Guy Lipton, *Watering Hole (Diptych)*, 2025





MIKKO MAKI

★ US MARINE CORPS

Love Casts Long Shadows

(as told to Bethany Maki) We are a family of four—two humans and two dogs—a constellation held together by love, memory, and the joyful chaos that only dogs can bring. All of our dogs have been bulldogs, a choice that traces back to Mikko's years as a Marine. As a retired Staff Sergeant, he naturally gravitated toward the Marine Corps mascot when we chose our first dog together. That's how Fiona came into our lives—sturdy, soulful, stubborn in the best bulldog way, and instantly the heart of our home.

When we lost Fiona during Breaking Barriers 2025, the shape of our family changed, but its center didn't. In those last moments, we whispered a request only dog people truly understand: that once she crossed the rainbow bridge, she might sprinkle a little fairy dust on the puppy meant to find us next. Not to replace her—because nothing ever could—but to guide the right new soul our way.

We began giving our dogs Finnish names to honor their connection to Mikko's healing journey. Caring for them is part of his therapy routine as he navigates life with an acquired brain injury, and the naming tradition became a way to root that care in heritage, strength, and continuity. Their daily rhythms—feeding, walking, structure, affection—keep him grounded and steady.

Keiju, whose name means "fairy" in Finnish, arrived just as we hoped: with Fiona's blessing. She brings light where the grief was heavy and reminds us that love doesn't end; it changes shape. Fiona is still part of our four—always. And Keiju carries her spark forward as our family continues to grow, heal, and adventure together.

Mikko Maki, ***Love Casts Long Shadows***, 2025



TANYA O'BRIEN

★ US NAVY

Scarf in the Breeze

My name is Dr. Tanya O'Brien. I served in the Navy for 12 years, and the only reason I am still here today is that I found the arts as a way to process my feelings and help propel me on my healing journey. My mental health problems seemed to come out of nowhere. For the last 3 years, I helped write and perform with the Veteran Civilian Arts Ensemble in Tampa. I have also published a book called *Into the Dark-A Sailor's Journey*. I have won both regional and national awards for dance, written word, and photography with the Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I have found that using different art forms: drawing, painting, music, writing, and leatherwork, all enable me to release or identify different feelings. It's not about the finished product; it is about the process. There is no comparing your work to others; it is about what your work says about you.

Tanya O'Brien, *Scarf in the Breeze*, 2025



KENYA SELMON

★ US ARMY

Kuma My Protector

Kuma is an American Akita. He is 8 years old and him wanting to go outside and play happens less and less, but his desire to protect is always there. I love the shadow in the grass of him; to regular people they see his shadow, to me I see a puppy. For some reason his fur and the grass compliment each other.

We were about to play, until he heard a noise and his ears stood straight up. It was just a mid-day moment when he had a burst of energy, so he went outside to wait for me to throw a toy when he heard a noise (in the neighbors yard) and that's when I took the picture, while he wasn't looking.

Kenya Selmon, *Kuma My Protector*, 2025



CHRIS SMITH

★ SPOUSE OF US ARMY VETERAN

Stairway to Heaven

The opportunity to see the world from a new lens is essential when we have experienced life-changing events. We get to look at moments from a new angle, perspective, or sense of understanding and in turn recreate the experience from a place of bravery and strength. We get to go beyond the moments that caused pain and see that we have survived, overcome, and will go on.

Chris Smith, *Stairway to Heaven*, 2025



KIMBERLEE NICOLE SMITH

★ US ARMY

Becoming

I am The Tenacious Rose
I am Mama N'Decia
I am the grand-daughter of
Mavis, Papa Hector, Doris and Cyrus
I am the daughter of
Eli Elias, and Marlene Marigold
I am the mother of Bear and Jojo
I am a Divine incarnation of that
which is without boundaries

Kimberlee Nicole Smith, ***Becoming***, 2025


Impact Project and Building
are internationally recognized as model
programs that can be scaled to build the capacity
of socially engaged artists/creatives to deepen
their impact and influence as agent for
change in our global society.
This or something
BETTER
Ase

RJ SMITH

★ US AIR FORCE

A Father's Role

The stain on the child's shirt is intentional—not an accident, but a truth. Growth is messy. Life marks you early. A father's role is not to keep the world clean, but to stand firm when it isn't.

This image speaks to protection without possession, guidance without words, strength without spectacle. It captures fatherhood not as instruction, but as endurance—being present, being seen, and being unmovable when everything else feels uncertain.

RJ Smith, *A Father's Role*, 2025



SHARON STENTZ

★ US ARMY NURSE

Her Father's Daughter

Her Father's Daughter is both a tribute and a conversation across generations. In this image, a daughter stands before an Army medical vehicle—her stance steady, her smile reflecting the strength learned from the man whose face softly emerges behind her. She smiles not only for the camera but for him—the man who taught her that courage often arrives quietly through skillful caring and unending presence. The young soldier in the Army cap is her late Father, whose own service as a medic set into motion a legacy of care that now lives on through decades of nursing and military service.

The overlay of their images blurs the line between past and present, creating a subtle dialogue about duty, compassion and caring for others. The red cross, bold and centered, becomes a bridge—a symbol of healing that connects their lifetimes and a shared call to serve others in moments of vulnerability and pain.

This work invites viewers to see how the imprint of love and care can travel through generations, shaping not just a career but a calling. It reminds us that service is not confined to uniforms or titles...it is a living thread stitched through memory, family, and purpose. In *Her Father's Daughter*, two lives converge into one enduring story of devotion—to country, to humanity, and to each other.

Sharon Stentz, *Her Father's Daughter*, 2025



ROGER ST JULIAN

★ US ARMY

Going Somewhere?

This image, at first glance appearing absurdly cute, also resonates with deep personal meaning. I have spent so much time afraid to be still, so much energy seeking to prove I am ENOUGH, and years buried under shame and self doubt—feeling unworthy of love. This organic and unexpected moment, captured rather than created, came as a gentle reminder that my place is HERE for now, that I am where I belong. The fragile/fear/feeling that for so long possessed my person, the being I inhabit, painting me as an unsafe container for real relationships, is in the breadth/breath of a single moment replaced In perpetuity. My spirit raised and renewed by Clarence serving as symbol—reminding me to be present, to be here, live in the now, with all the strength and confidence carried by this comfortable cat. Stop running from connection, and from yourself, he seems to tell me, sleepily.

As you navigate this short narrative, please indulge me, and breathe deeply into the center of your being, giving gratitude for the person you are in this moment. I would suggest this photo as a challenge to accept your own invitation to simply BE, knowing you are enough... Clarence would certainly think so.

Roger St Julian, *Going Somewhere?*, 2025



MONIKA SUTTON

★ SPOUSE OF RETIRED US ARMY VETERAN

Through the Window, Through the Tears

I took this photo not long after my grandma passed, and at first, it just felt like rain on a window—quiet, heavy, and still. But when I looked closer, I noticed the sun beginning to break through the clouds, its light reflecting in each tiny droplet. It felt like a message, gentle but certain: even after the heaviest rain, light always finds a way back. In that moment, I thought of her—how she was warmth in every storm, how her love lingered even when she wasn't physically here anymore. The world outside the window looked blurred, uncertain, but the sunlight reminded me that grief and beauty can coexist. The tears we shed don't erase the light; they refract it, shaping it into something softer and deeper. Now, when I look at this photo, I see more than weather. I see healing beginning, love continuing, and a quiet reminder that endings are never truly final—they just change form, like sunlight breaking through after the rain.

Monika Sutton, *Through the Window, Through the Tears,* 2025



RAEANNE SWANSON

★ US AIR FORCE

The Stories of One House

The Stories of One House was inspired by the hundreds of photographs I took in Boothbay Harbor, Maine while on my yearly vacation with a group of military friends! We spent a week in this lovely town and walked everywhere, day and night. This particular historic house that had been turned into a bed and breakfast was so eye-catching during the day. With its lush greenery, wonderfully colorful and fragrant flowers both planted and hanging from flower boxes affixed to the windows, and the balcony with wicker chairs that must have offered a fantastic view of the harbor filled with sailboats and yachts, I couldn't help but photograph it many times from several angles trying to capture its beauty. And then we walked past it in the evening and I fell in love with this house even more!

The night time view offered such a different perspective from the day with the warm and welcoming interior lights aglow, slightly showing some of what must be a fabulously decorated interior, and the many windows that surly offered a view of the harbor in the evening with lights glowing inside from houses across the water and the string lights of the harbor walk and boat lights glowing above the water in the evening fog. These two photographs represent the wonderful feelings that I experienced the entire week I was lucky enough to visit Boothbay Harbor and its lovely historical homes, landscapes, and harbor waters.

Raeanne Swanson, *The Stories of One House*, 2025





VIANA TAVARES

★ US ARMY

Arizona Beauty at Night

As I stood outside gazing at the Arizona night sky, I took a photograph and thought of my father. The red, orange, and yellow hues remind me how beautiful life is even after life ends on earth. I smiled reflecting on the care and love he instilled in us and all he did for my siblings and me. His compassion, understanding, and faith guided us while he served our country for 20 years. Twice as he was deployed to Vietnam fear consumed me. I remember staying strong in faith he would return.

My father touched my life as I matured into the woman I am today. The traits he pasted into my soul sky-rocketed the determination in me to always strive for greatness in whatever path I choose. It was rocky at times; however, I circled 360 degrees, returned to my roots, and became the best version of myself. My father was the first person to recognize my talent as a creative writer even though I didn't recognize it until later in my life. He lived long enough to see all beautiful photos.

My creative writing, poetry, prose, and photography have opened a brand-new world for me. At times it seems unbelievable I have accomplished so much in my life. It surpasses my own understanding.

My father always called me Trooper Vee (Viana) in private as we smiled together. I carry his love in all my creative endeavors. My photography portrays the unimaginable beauty I see. And I will continue on in his light as I honor him.

Viana Tavares, *Arizona Beauty at Night*, 2025



MELISA VÉLEZ

★ US ARMY

Above It All

As I looked out from the airplane window, I was struck by the stillness below—the tiny cities, the scattered clouds, and the sunlight softly touching the sea. For a moment, I felt completely free. The view reminded me of how far I've come, not just in miles, but in life. As a veteran, I've experienced both the weight of responsibility and the challenge of finding peace after service. Seeing the world from above reminded me that even when things look overwhelming on the ground, there's always a bigger picture—one filled with light, space, and hope.

This image represents healing for me. The clouds symbolize the obstacles I've faced, and the open sky reminds me that I can rise beyond them. It's a moment of reflection, gratitude, and strength—something I want others to feel when they see this photograph. *Above It All* is not just a view from the sky; it's a reminder that growth and peace come when we learn to look beyond what's right in front of us, and trust that there's beauty waiting ahead.

Melisa Vélez, ***Above It All***, 2025



MICHAEL D. WEBB

★ US AIR FORCE

Angst of Attention

After retiring from the United States Air Force, I began a new chapter of life in Spain, embracing the opportunity to live and create in the heart of Europe. Photography has become my way of exploring and honoring the history, culture, and architecture that surround me each day.

Living in Europe provides an extraordinary array of visual landscape—ancient cathedrals, Moorish fortresses, timeless villages, and layers of civilization etched into stone and street. I am drawn to the textures of weathered walls, the interplay of light and shadow across historic architecture, and the quiet presence of stories held within centuries-old spaces.

My military background instilled in me discipline, patience, and attention to detail—qualities that now shape my photographic approach. I seek structure in composition while remaining open to spontaneity in light and atmosphere. Through my lens, I aim to capture not just places, but the feeling of standing within history—moments where past and present quietly converge.

Photography allows me to share my journey of transition, gratitude, and discovery as I continue living the dream in Spain.

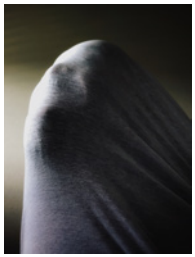
Michael D. Webb, *Angst of Attention*, 2025

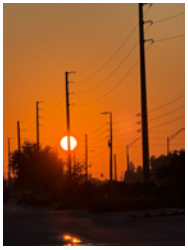


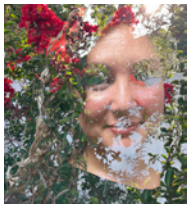

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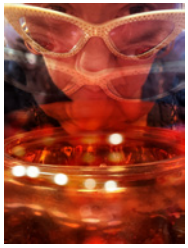

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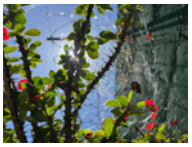

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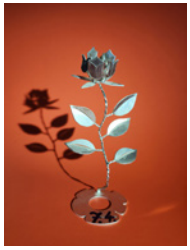

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1. CHRISTOPHER ALGARIN
Finding Me

2. MANFREDO BOBADILLA
Shadow Work

3. DAVID BRYANT
Distractions

4. LUIS E. CARRASCO JR.
Freedom

5. PATRICIA A. COLBERT
An Unexpected Pit Stop

6. DIANA COLON
Thriving

7. GAIL CROSS
Pumpkin Spice

8. BERNADETTE DUNN
Red Sphere Illusion

9. MICHAEL E. DUNSON JR.
Webs Woven, Forward

10. SHA'NA FOLKS
The House Always Shifts

11. EVAN FOUNTAIN
The Narrowing Gyre

12. PAUL HALL
O Fortunada Never Ends

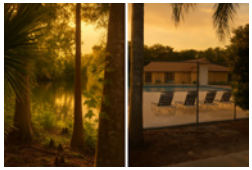
13. EDITHA PEREZ HEBERLEIN
Glow and Shadow

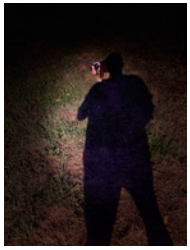
14. ROGER C. HEBERLEIN
The Simple Beauty of Colored Glass

15. VALERIE LARSON
Missing Pieces

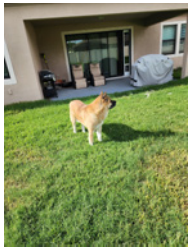
ALL PHOTOGRAPHS (2025)
COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS


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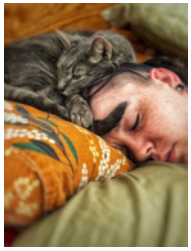

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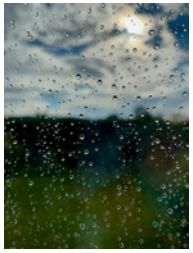

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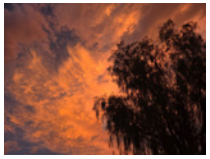

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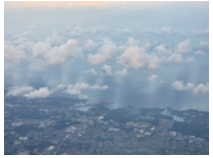

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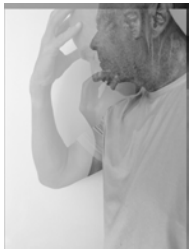

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16. JOHN LEDUC
Night Flight

17. KEVIN GUY LIPTON
Watering Hole (Diptych)

18. MIKKO MAKI
Love Casts Long Shadows

19. TANYA O'BRIEN
Scarf in the Breeze

20. KENYA SELMON
Kuma My Protector

21. CHRIS SMITH
Stairway to Heaven

22. KIMBERLEE NICOLE SMITH
Becoming

23. RJ SMITH
A Father's Role

24. SHARON STENTZ
Her Father's Daughter

25. ROGER ST JULIAN
Going Somewhere?

26. MONIKA SUTTON
Through the Window, Through the Tears

27. RAEANNE SWANSON
The Stories of One House

28. VIANA TAVARES
Arizona Beauty at Night

29. MELISA VÉLEZ
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30. MICHAEL D. WEBB
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COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

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