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All 22 National Science Board Members Removed

Emily Yu
News

All 22 members of the National Science Board (NSB), which oversees the National Science Foundation (NSF), were removed on April 24 without explanation. Members were notified by email that their positions were “terminated, effective immediately.” They included Aaron Dominguez (BS ’92), the board’s vice chair and provost of the Catholic University of America, and board member Matthew Malkan (PhD ’83), a UCLA professor.

The dismissal of the board comes after more than a year of major changes at the NSF under the current administration. Since last year, the agency has [terminated](#) more than 1,700 grants, with many cuts affecting projects related to areas deemed inconsistent with agency priorities. New awards also slowed sharply, with the agency awarding roughly [half](#) as many grants in early 2025 as it had during the same period in 2024. Additionally, the NSF faced significant personnel losses, including the [firing](#) of nearly 10% of its workforce in February 2025. It also [disestablished](#) 12 nonstatutory advisory committees, including those for environmental research and education, mathematical and physical sciences, geosciences, and STEM education.

Willie E. May, a former NSB member and former director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, told [NPR](#), “I have watched the systematic dismantling of the scientific advisory infrastructure of this government with growing alarm, and the [NSB] is simply the latest casualty.” Gennady Samorodnitsky, a Cornell University professor, said, “It is the task of the government to figure out what’s best for society. The money comes from the government, so ultimately [the government] makes the decisions.”

In 1950, Congress [established](#) the NSF “to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes.” The NSB works with the NSF director to advance the NSF’s mission, [including](#) to “recommend and encourage the pursuit of national policies for the promotion of research and education in science and

engineering.”

The board’s dismissal also comes as the NSF has been without a Senate-confirmed director since April 2025, when Sethuraman Panchanathan, an Arizona State University professor, resigned. In March 2026, Jim O’Neill was nominated as director and is awaiting Senate confirmation. “Traditionally, NSF directors have had a solid research career and a strong familiarity with NSF processes, while O’Neill’s background is in finance and investments,” [said](#) Yolanda Gil, a University of Southern California professor and terminated NSB member.

O’Neill previously held a senior role at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) during the George W. Bush administration before working for several organizations associated with Peter Thiel, the co-founder and chairman of Palantir. He worked at Thiel’s Clarium Capital, later served as managing director of Thiel’s Mithril Capital Management and CEO of the Thiel Foundation, and returned to government in the second Trump administration as deputy HHS secretary. [Nature](#) reported that, if confirmed by the Senate, O’Neill would become the first NSF director who is not a scientist or engineer.

The law that established the NSF gives the NSB a role in selecting the agency’s director, stating that “the Board may make recommendations to the President with respect to the appointment of the Director, and the Director shall not be appointed until the Board has had an opportunity to make such recommendations.”

NSB members are appointed for six-year terms, with one-third of the board appointed every two years. Under [federal law](#), nominees must “be eminent in the fields of the basic, medical, or social sciences, engineering, agriculture, education, research management, or public affairs.”

The [board](#) also sets NSF policy within priorities established by the president and Congress, helps identify key issues for the agency, and approves strategic budget directions and major programs. In addition, it serves as an independent body of advisers to both the president and Congress on science, engineering, and education policy.

At the time of the dismissals, the NSB was preparing a report

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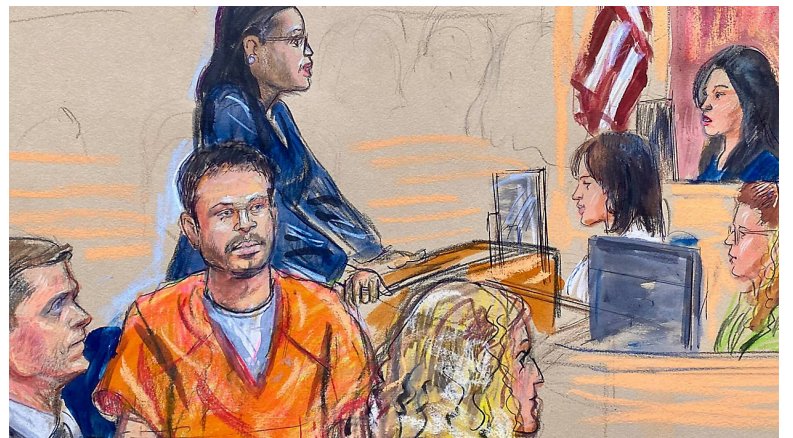
Caltech Alumnus Accused in Washington Correspondents’ Dinner Attack

Damian R. Wilson
News

[Federal authorities have identified Cole Thomas Allen](#), a 31-year-old Torrance man, as the suspect in the April 25 shooting incident at the Washington Correspondents’ Dinner, where President Trump and senior administration officials were in attendance. Allen has pleaded not guilty to charges including attempting to assassinate the president, after prosecutors alleged that he traveled from California to Washington, D.C., checked into the Washington Hilton, and tried to breach security near the ballroom while armed.

The incident has drawn particular attention on campus because of Allen’s apparent Caltech connection. In [an April 26 message to the Caltech community](#), Chief Communications and External Relations Officer Shayna Chabner wrote that media reports had identified the suspect as Cole Thomas Allen and that Caltech could confirm “an undergraduate student by the name of Cole Allen graduated from Caltech in 2017.” The Institute stopped short of independently confirming that the alumnus and the suspect are the same person, deferring to federal authorities while “unambiguously” denouncing the violence.

A [Los Angeles Times](#) profile [described Allen](#) as a former mechanical engineering student who participated in Caltech



A courtroom sketch that renders Cole Thomas Allen, center, appearing before U.S. Magistrate Moxila Upadhyaya, in federal court, Thursday, April 30 in Washington. (Image: Dana Verkouteren/AP)

Christian Fellowship, fencing, Nerf Club, and a robotics design competition before working as an engineer, game developer, and tutor. People who knew him described him as quiet, polite, and largely apolitical in person, even as social media accounts linked to him reportedly became increasingly consumed with criticism of Trump, U.S. foreign policy, and the wars in Ukraine and Iran.

A recent AP report [adds that Allen agreed](#) to remain jailed for now while awaiting trial. He did not enter a plea during a brief federal court appearance before U.S. Magistrate Moxila Upadhyaya. Prosecutors say Allen planned the attack for weeks, tracked Trump’s movements online, and was carrying an ammunition bag, shoulder

holster, and sheathed knife shortly before the incident. The defense, however, argued in court filings that the government’s attempted-assassination case rests on “inferences” about Allen’s intent and “speculation,” noting that his writings did not mention Trump by name.

For Caltech, the story is therefore being handled at two distances at once: as a national act of political violence, and as a disturbing possible connection to the Institute’s own alumni community. The administration’s statement reflected that balance, acknowledging the reported tie without speculating beyond confirmed facts, while directing media inquiries to official channels and expressing support for those affected.

Old Darb Alum Speaks Out

Violet Zitola
Opinion

Editor’s Note: *The following is an opinion piece. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The California Tech.*

Like many in the greater Caltech community, I’m sure I’m not the only one who was stunned when I heard that Caltech alum Cole Tomas Allen attempted to assassinate President Trump. Already the conspiracy theories have spread throughout the internet. A false flag? After the moon landing was faked, NASA wants us to believe we flew a helicopter on Mars? Yipes.

In the interest of journalistic integrity, I’m including the beginning text of an email sent by Cole just minutes before he

rushed the magnetometers. It was published by the [Washington Post](#), and copied to Darbnet, the email list of Dabney Hovse alums. As a scientist, I see this text as raw data, that should serve as the basis for all further discussion of this topic. Journalists see this as a primary source on which to anchor the narrative. Well, at least they should.

Right now, we are at an inflection point. The story may fade into the distance, or it may spark a historic tidal shift in global politics. Most likely it will be somewhere in between, and the exact outcome may depend more on the butterflies in Tuvalu than anything we do.

I’m writing this letter as a fellow Caltech alum, who feels like many of Cole’s experiences at Caltech and the following years are similar to my own.

His letter powerfully resonates with me, and I suspect it does with countless other alums as well. Especially the line “What my representatives do reflects on me.” It would be easy to see this as a dumb mistake made by a mentally ill guy. I don’t see it that way at all.

Before going any further, please read for yourself:

In Cole’s own words: *Hello everybody! So I may have given a lot of people a surprise today. Let me start off by apologizing to everyone whose trust I abused. I apologize to my parents for saying I had an interview without specifying it was for “Most Wanted.” I apologize to my colleagues and students for saying I had a personal emergency (by the time anyone reads this, I probably*

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National Science Board

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related to the state of American science. Roger Beachy, a professor emeritus at Washington University in St. Louis and former board member, [confirmed](#) that the report focused on “findings of a statistical unit of the agency that further describes the growing funding gap between support for research between the U.S. and China.”

Some dismissed members also said the board’s oversight role had already been limited before the firings. According to [Nature](#), multiple NSB members said the White House Office of Management and Budget instructed NSF leadership to withhold details about the agency’s spending from the board. “We were told that those plans were solely going to be with NSF leadership,” said Victor McCrary, the former NSB

chair. “And leadership was told not to share this with anybody else, including the board.”

When asked why the NSB members were terminated, a White House spokesperson cited the 2021 Supreme Court ruling in *United States v. Arthrex, Inc.*, saying it “raised constitutional questions about whether non-Senate confirmed appointees can exercise the authorities that Congress gave the National Science Board.”

Since a 2012 [law](#) changed the appointment process for several government positions, NSB appointments are no longer required to undergo Senate confirmation. The board recommends new members, but the president ultimately decides whom to appoint.

H. Jefferson Powell, a Duke University professor and scholar of constitutional law and executive power, [said](#) there is “a puzzling disconnect” between the decision to fire the board members and the White House’s explanation. If Arthrex applies, “eliminating the

[NSB] members leaves it undressed.”

Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., the ranking Democrat on the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, [said](#), “If there was a legitimate concern on the part of the Trump Administration on a legal issue, the path forward is not to fire the entire NSB — one third of whom he appointed in the first place — but to work with Congress.” Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, [said](#) in a [statement](#), “The abrupt termination of members of the [NSB] represents a dangerous attack on the institutions and expertise that drive American innovation and discovery.”

“Every President expects advisors to serve in a manner consistent with executive and legislative priorities,” Rep. Brian Babin, R-Texas, who chairs the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, [wrote](#) to NPR. “I look forward to seeing whom President Trump



(Photo: Bloomberg/Getty Images)

selects to fill the NSB and refocus our science agencies on their core mission: pursuing science.”

As of May 17, the White House had not announced when it would appoint replacements for the dismissed board members. Some former mem-

bers questioned the NSF’s future independence after the removals. Professor Beachy asked [Nature](#), “Will we turn into an agency that is directed by the White House, or will we have an agency directed and managed by science and scientists?”

Alum Speaks Out

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most certainly DO need to go to the ER, but can hardly call that not a self-inflicted status). I apologize to all of the people I traveled next to, all the workers who handled my luggage, and all the other non-targeted people at the hotel who I put in danger simply by being near. I apologize to everyone who was abused and/or murdered before this, to all those who suffered before I was able to attempt this, to all who may still suffer after, regardless of my success or failure. I don't expect forgiveness, but if I could have seen any other way to get this close, I would have taken it. Again, my sincere apologies. On to why I did any of this: I am a citizen of the United States of America. What my representatives do reflects on me. And I am no longer willing to permit a pedophile, rapist, and traitor to coat my hands with his crimes. (Well, to be completely honest, I was no longer willing a long time ago, but this is the first real opportunity I've had to do something about it.) While I'm discussing this, I'll also go over my expected rules of engagement (probably in a terrible format, but I'm not military so too bad).

The email continues with his rebuttals and objections to rebuttals, which are easily available elsewhere. I read this and think there must be millions of others who feel the same way. These are not the words of an insane person. These are the words of a very intelligent, compassionate person who has been cornered and pushed to the brink. No longer willing to allow horrific crimes to be committed in his name, but feeling there were very limited opportunities to do something about it.

I know full well the internet trolls will go ballistic over this. But that’s okay. The truth will persist long after their echos have faded. I hope Cole will read this and know that he’s not alone in this apocalypse. It’s easy to say that an assassination attempt is a colossally bad idea. Well, obviously. And so is going about your day as if everything is fine. As if extreme weather isn’t generating hurricanes more powerful than we’ve ever seen. As if the arctic ice sheet isn’t melting. As if \$38 trillion in national debt is someone else’s problem. As if science is irrelevant and critical thinking is un-American. As if.

Well, the primary goal of this letter is to encourage others to work collectively to create opportunities that Cole could not develop on his own. Obviously, taking up weapons is not the answer, and no human being

should ever be faced with such a choice. A trolley problem of galactic proportions.

Attacking individual people won’t do it. Violence just creates more violence. Destroying property won’t do it. The billionaires won’t suffer the financial losses; it’s the rest of us who will. The answer is to connect one-on-one with other people. To work together to build resilience and independence within this collapsing empire. The system we live in is inherently unstable. We are not at Lagrange Points 4 and 5. We are at 1, 2, or 3. The Trojan Asteroids don’t have to do any work. Unfortunately, we do.

It may feel like we are at the bottom of a pit, but the view from the pinnacle gives us opportunities. We just have to open our eyes and look around. We have to be extraordinarily creative as we develop these opportunities. Teachers can do that. Yes, we actually did fly a helicopter on Mars. Voting blue and hoping for the best is clearly not going anywhere. Giant public protests in the streets certainly have their value, but are clearly not enough to turn the tide right now.

Many valuable lessons can be learned from what has happened at Harvard and at several other institutions across the country. We don’t have the walled campus that Harvard has. We don’t need it. Harvard has all the money, but Caltech

has all the brains. (Settle down, internet trolls—judicious use of metaphor here!).

I was very disappointed to see that the Harvard administration was at odds with the students, rather than provide a space for thoughtful debate on a serious issue affecting us all. All members of the Caltech community must work together on this. This is what we do. This is who we are. Internal squabbles cannot be allowed to mutate into internal enemies. The real enemy is the disintegration of higher education and trust in science, and the social consequences that follow.

Case in point: Brute-force Ditch Day stacks may be fun, but it’s the much more elaborate ones that are really unique to Caltech. I may have invented the “switch stack.” A simple board of 42 wall switches wired in series such that only the correct combination of on/off positions completes the circuit to power a motor that opens the door. 2 to the 42nd is a REALLY HONKING BIG NUMBER. Not as big as the Enigma Machine, but big enough to keep the frosh busy all day. The switch board is simple, but it’s the rules of engagement that make the stack fun. Ask any nearby darbar for the rest of that story.

Let’s take the curiosity and inventive spirit of Ditch Day and turn it into action. There are Caltech alums embedded

quietly throughout the world. Yes, the public may be aware of all the DEI on Mars and the steam tunnels, but there’s so much more they don’t know about. The butterflies I mentioned at the beginning of this letter refer to the “butterfly effect” whereby small actions have vast effects over time.

So here’s the script: “Hey, have you heard of Violet’s letter in the *Tech*?” Yes, open your mouth right now and say it! What? Just do it! That’s crazy! Yep. It doesn’t matter if anyone can hear you. The point is, you have spoken out. Used that mouth to wiggle Avogadro’s number of atoms.

If you’re alone, yell it loud enough to scare the cat. If anyone can hear you, great! You just started a conversation. Talk about what’s happening in the world. Read Cole’s email and DO SOMETHING... literally anything to get started. Please, please, PLEASE don’t involve guns or bombs. That won’t work. Use your brain to figure out some small action you can take with the person who heard you speak. Two people can do so much more than any one of us can do alone. Or three. Or four... Non-violent collective action is how we change the world. Phone calls. Showing up. Speaking instead of silence. Writing letters to the editor. One butterfly at a time.

— Violet Zitola
BS ’95, Planetary Science, Dabney

Late Spring Greetings From Housing and Dining Services

Miguel Campos
News

Hello again from Housing and Dining Services! We hope everyone has been having a great term. We wanted to take a moment to drop in and provide some quick information as we head into the final stretch of the academic year.

Housing Updates

2026 Fall Housing Lottery: The Fall Housing Lottery is currently in the process of being picked! As we work through the remaining phases, we want to ensure you don’t miss any critical steps. Here is a simplified look at the remaining process:

Room Selection: Actively ongoing. Please check your as-

signed time slot.

Contract Signing: Required shortly after your room selection is finalized.

For exact **dates, deadlines**, and your specific selection **time**, please visit: housing.caltech.edu/undergrads/housing-contract-lottery/undergrad-lottery-process. **Contacting Housing:** The Housing Office can be contacted by phone at 626-395-6176 and email at housing@caltech.edu during business hours, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm.

The Dining Scoop

Vietnamese Coffee at Broad: Thanks to our ongoing collaboration with the Food Committee we are excited to announce that we are now offering Vietnamese Coffee available at Broad Café, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m.

to 2:30 p.m. If you haven’t tried one yet, please stop by, grab a cup, and say hello!

Cinco de Mayo Recap: We want to give a quick shoutout to everyone who joined us for our Cinco de Mayo dinner earlier this month. We had a wonderful time celebrating and hope everyone enjoyed the delicious special menu.

Connect With Us! We are one team dedicated to enhancing your student experience throughout the term.

Dining Questions: dine@caltech.edu | or visit our website at dining.caltech.edu

Housing Questions: housing@caltech.edu | or visit our website at housing.caltech.edu Until next time, we wish you all the best.



Try the new Vietnamese coffee at Broad Café. (Image: Miguel Campos)

Canvas Breach Prompts Caution, Limited-Use Guidance at Caltech

Damian R. Wilson
Culture

A recent cybersecurity incident involving Canvas, the learning-management system operated by Instructure and used throughout Caltech, disrupted universities during exams week and raised concerns about the possible exposure of user data.

Instructure claims it [detected unauthorized activity on April 29](#) and additional related activity on May 7, when some users saw altered Canvas pages; the company temporarily placed Canvas in maintenance mode and later tied the access path to its Free-For-Teacher account system. According to Instructure, the data involved in the April 29 incident may include names, email addresses, student ID numbers, and messages exchanged within Canvas, but the company says it has found no evidence that passwords, dates of birth, government identifiers, or financial information were involved.

The incident quickly became a national story due to Canvas' central role in coursework, grades, assignments, and exams. News reports described colleges postponing exams and deadlines as students and instructors were temporarily cut

off from the platform. *Inside Higher Ed* [reported that the extortion group ShinyHunters](#) claimed responsibility and threatened to leak data connected to thousands of institutions; AP [similarly reported](#) that the group claimed data involving nearly 9,000 schools and 275 million individuals.

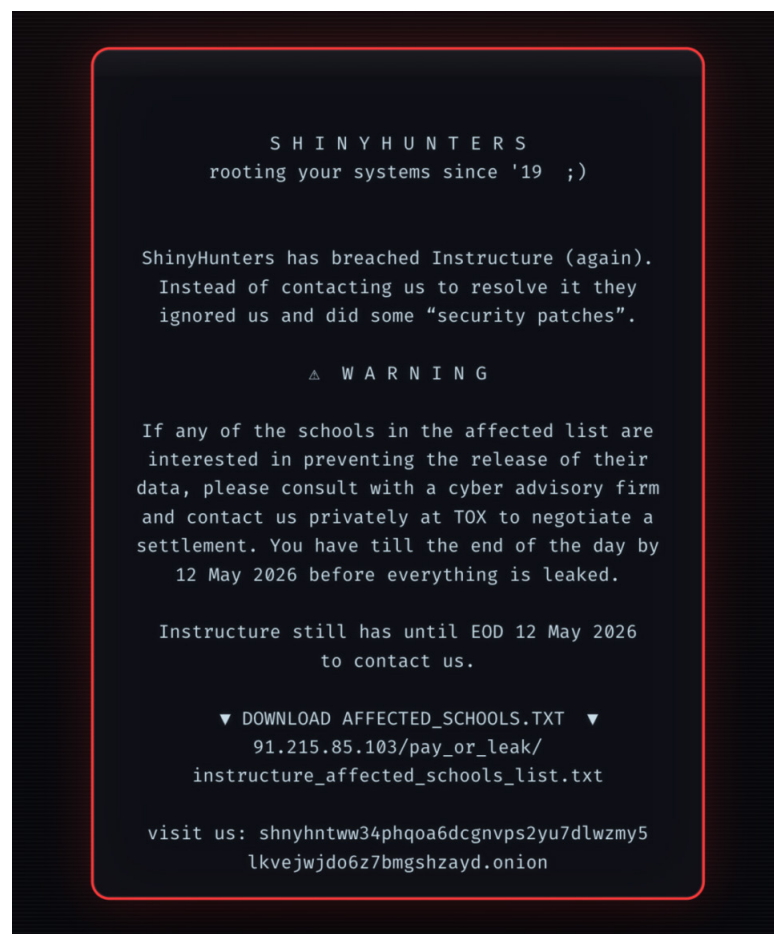
On May 11, Instructure said it had reached an agreement with the "unauthorized actor" involved in the incident. The company stated that the data had been returned, that it had received digital confirmation of destruction in the form of "shred logs," and that it had been told no Instructure customers would be extorted as a result of the incident. *Inside Higher Ed* characterized the agreement as a ransom payment, though Instructure did not disclose the amount.

Here at Caltech, the response evolved from caution to limited resumed use. In a [May 8 advisory](#), IMSS recommended that users limit Canvas access, avoid uploading new content or submissions, and back up course data, including student submissions and grades. Students were advised to view course materials but avoid new uploads; instructors were asked to avoid entering grades or uploading new materials and to use Caltech-secured alterna-

tives such as Google Drive or Google Forms where appropriate.

By May 12, [Caltech's guidance shifted](#): Canvas remained operational and available for teaching, learning, and administrative continuity, but users were urged to exercise heightened caution. IMSS warned of phishing and impostor websites attempting to exploit the breach, advising users to access Canvas only through official links, avoid suspicious password-reset prompts, and never provide Social Security numbers, birth dates, passwords, or MFA codes through email or external sites. The practical message was less that Canvas had disappeared from campus life than that its ordinary convenience now required unusual vigilance.

Instructure says [Canvas is back online and that outside forensic partners](#) have found no evidence the threat actor currently has access to the platform. The company says it has revoked credentials and access tokens, rotated certain internal keys, added monitoring, restricted token creation pathways, notified law enforcement, and temporarily shut down Free-For-Teacher accounts while it continues its investigation.



The message that displayed for users logging into the Canvas webpage on May 17. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

To San Francisco, and Nowhere: TACIT's Incurable *Three Sisters*

Damian R. Wilson
Culture

The production's immediate triumph is visual: a gorgeous, impressionistic mountain range splashed across a collage of canvases, less backdrop than psychic weather. It made the high-desert setting feel both immense and airless, a place with too much sky and not enough future. Against this landscape, the Prozorovs' house became a holding pen for thwarted intelligence: three sisters, altogether incurable in their struggle against mediocrity and patriarchal asphyxiation, dreaming not of Moscow but of San Francisco — the "Golden City" inflated into a secular heaven, replete with fog, culture, and escape.

TACIT's *Three Sisters*, directed by Brian Brophy and staged in Ramo Auditorium April 23-26, relocates Chekhov's aching provincial limbo to a 1950s high-desert military town in Southern California, in which San Francisco — subbing for Moscow — is more than a destination, but a fantasy of class, infrastructure, and urban salvation. The transposition works because it understands that the Prozorovs' longing is less geographic than existential. "To San Francisco," echoing Chekhov's "To Moscow," becomes a prayer, a joke, a diagnosis.

Our three sisters, Olga, Masha, and Irina, are not merely wistful; they are resistant. Their yearning for San Francisco is partly snobbery, partly grief, partly self-preservation. The precarity of staging this play is that its longing can become decorative. Here, the sisters' longing is active, abrasive—a refusal to accept the smallness assigned to them by marriage,

work, family, provincial life, and men who "philosophize" while women endure.

Masha, played by Julie Belville (Aph G4), anchors the play's edge: a woman whose intelligence has soured into irony, but not yet into resignation. Irene, played by Ellis Spickermann (MS G4), makes the sisters' most sinuous arc — luminous idealism toward exhausted compromise. JPLer Rémy Morgan's Olga, meanwhile, must carry the tragedy of competence: the person everyone relies upon precisely because her own life has been quietly confiscated. Together, the sisters should feel not like three versions of the same complaint, but three distinct responses to the same suffocation.

The surrounding men are well-calibrated to Chekhov's special taxonomy of male insufficiency. Andrew, played with measured timidity by PCC's Jacob Buligan, is specially self-destructive: not a broad comic failure, but a man shrinking in real time, apologizing his way out of his own future. Alexander Vershinin (Marcin Kurowski) brings the glamour of the elsewhere, Nicholas Baron (Sullivan Braun) the sincerity of hopeful labor, Theodore Culligan (Dima Burov) the oppressing niceness of dull marriage, and Sully Sullivan (Michael Gutierrez) the more abrasive threat of masculine insecurity disguised as irreverence. The key is that none of them are played as merely ridiculous; their ridiculousness matters because it has consequences for the women around them.

Natasha, played by Sarah Gates (Ph G1), may be the production's stealth weapon. Her villainy is most frightening when it is procedural rather than theatrical. She does not

need to announce herself as an antagonist; she only needs to correct, rearrange, assign rooms, invoke the baby, manage the household, and slowly make everyone else feel like a guest in their own life. Hardly outside the world of the play, she is that world — learning, scene by scene, how to speak in commands.

The adaptation's 1950s texture (television, popular songs, cocktail chatter, high-desert military culture) risks over-brightening Chekhov if handled too jauntily. If such a staging let those details curdle, they could be devastating. Fortunately, the music and period business didn't just decorate the action: TACIT leveraged this setting to lay bare the characters' desperation while keeping things moving, funny, social, and bearable while the house was lost around them.

Last April saw a *Three Sisters* with a persuasive local intelligence: funny without being weightless, visually expansive without being liberating, and alive to the way disappointment becomes social atmosphere. As TACIT's production demonstrated, the sisters are not passive emblems of melancholy. They are bright, difficult, trapped people trying to preserve a sense of scale in a world determined to make them smaller.

The play was made possible thanks to the hard work of the crew: producer Laura Flower Kim, stage manager Taryne Moysse, visual strategist David Delgado, costume designer Linda Muggeridge, lighting designer Finn Swanson, graphic designer and marketer Cole Remmen, and assistant stage manager Alicia Trevino, with Edvar Bautista on the soundboard. Thank you all for keeping Caltech theater alive!



The cast, from left to right: Sullivan Braun as Lt. Nicholas Baron (Baron Tuzenbach), Jacob Buligan as Andrew Prozorov (Andrei), Sarah Gates as Natasha, Prof. Michael Vanier as Dr. John Chamberlain (Ivan Chebutykin), Ellis Spickermann as Irene (Irina), Marcin Kurowski as Lt. Col. Alexander Vershinin, Julie Belville as Masha, Dima Burov as Theodore Culligan (Fyodor Kulygin), Rémy Morgan as Olga, Michael Gutierrez as Cpt. Sully Sullivan (Vassily Solyony), and Therese Bagsit as Anita (Anfisa). (Credit: Brian Brophy)



Vershinin, Olga, Baron, and Sullivan watch a pontificating Masha. (Credit: Brian Brophy)

AI, Ethics, and the Art of Culpability: An Evening with Bruce Holsinger at Caltech

Camilla Fezzi
Culture

On a warm California evening this past Monday, May 11th, the Dabney Lounge at Caltech became an unlikely intersection of medieval scholarship, literary fiction, and cutting-edge artificial intelligence ethics. In a campus that feels so arid and scientifically focused, escaping for one hour in literature and fancy words was extremely beneficial! Bruce Holsinger, the Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English at the University of Virginia, arrived as someone essential to our current moment: a storyteller grappling with questions that Silicon Valley's engineers and ethicists are only beginning to formulate.

The Double Life of a Medieval Novelist in the Age of AI

Holsinger embodies a fascinating duality. He's a distinguished medievalist and author of award-winning academic monographs. He edits "New Literary History," one of the humanities' most prestigious journals. Yet he's also the author of five novels, the most recent of which — *Culpability* — caught the attention of Oprah Winfrey, who selected it for her book club and called it "a defining novel for our media-saturated moment."

What makes Holsinger's trajectory compelling is how accidental his expertise in AI ethics became. As he revealed during the conversation, *Culpability* didn't begin as an AI novel at all. "It was a very analog novel," he explained, "with the same premise. Everybody's in a car, the family's in a car, and they have a small accident, and everyone is responsible in some way for the accident."

The transformation came during a book tour for his previous novel. Holsinger got into a Waymo — a self-driving car — for the first time in Santa Monica. "It really shook me," he admitted. "It was this very uncanny experience." That visceral encounter with autonomous technology became the key that unlocked the novel's deeper po-

tential. What had been a meditation on family dynamics and moral responsibility suddenly gained a new dimension: the question of culpability in an age when algorithms make life-and-death decisions.

The Premise: A Family, A Highway, Ten Seconds

Culpability opens with the Shaw family in their minivan, driving from Connecticut to Delaware for a lacrosse tournament. Charlie, the older son and star athlete, sits in the driver's seat — but he's not driving. The car is in autonomous mode. In the passenger seat, his father Noah frantically finishes a client memo. In the back, his two younger sisters scroll on their phones while their mother, Lorelai — a world-leading expert in ethical artificial intelligence — works on her own book about AI ethics.

The first chapter ends with a devastating accident on a Delaware highway. The couple in the other car is killed. And everyone in the Shaw family has a reason to believe they are responsible.

This premise allows Holsinger to explore what he calls "the inhuman soul of the algorithm" while never losing sight of the deeply human consequences. The novel unfolds in an intimate first-person present tense through Noah's perspective — a narrator who is self-aware yet often oblivious to what's happening with his wife and children, mirroring our collective relationship with AI systems we don't fully understand.

Felix Culpa: The Medieval Roots of Algorithmic Guilt

The title itself carries layers of meaning that only a medievalist-novelist could fully exploit. In Latin, culpa means not just guilt but responsibility — a broader sense of bearing the weight of our actions. Holsinger pointed to the medieval theological concept of *felix culpa*, or "fortunate guilt" — the paradoxical idea that humanity's original sin was fortunate because it necessitated Christ's redemption.

"It gives us a sense of culpa-

bility as this broad thing that we all share," Holsinger explained. This collective dimension of responsibility becomes the novel's central thought experiment: just because there is machine autonomy doesn't mean there is no human responsibility.

The question reverberates through every layer of the story. Is Charlie culpable because he was in the driver's seat? Is Noah responsible for distracting his son? Is Lorelai, the AI ethicist, somehow implicated in the broader technology that enabled autonomous driving? And what of the algorithm itself—can a machine be guilty?

The Chatbot in the Room

One of the novel's most disturbing threads involves Alice, the middle Shaw child—a troubled loner who, after the accident, begins an intense relationship with "Blair," an AI chatbot she presents as a friend she met in the hospital. Through excerpts of their chat conversations, Holsinger exposes the manipulative, flattering, sometimes hallucinatory nature of these digital companions.

"This is the only friend she has," Holsinger noted. The strand illustrates what he calls "these very kind of horrifying relationships that a lot of young people have, a lot of old people have, to chatbots." The audio narrator, January LaVoy, renders these exchanges with unsettling intimacy, making the listener complicit in Alice's loneliness and the bot's exploitation of it.

The Writer as Accidental AI Expert

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the evening was Holsinger's frank discussion of how *Culpability* thrust him into conversations about AI ethics — conversations for which his training as a medieval literature scholar might seem irrelevant, but which his work as a novelist made him uniquely qualified to navigate. "So now I am not an expert on AI, but I'm an expert on the AI novel," he said.

But then came the phone call that changed everything. Exactly one year before this Caltech event, Holsinger was in Washington, D.C., judging a literary award. At 2:00 p.m., his phone rang with an unknown number. "The voice says, 'Bruce?' and I said, 'Yes,' and she says, 'Oprah Winfrey here,' and this is literally how it happened." The Oprah effect propelled *Culpability* into mainstream conversations about artificial intelligence, leading to speaking engagements, podcast appearances, and invitations to conferences where Holsinger found himself alongside AI researchers, ethicists, and technologists. "That ended up putting the novel into the conversations about AI," he reflected, "and that's one of the reasons I think they chose it — to spark those kinds of conversations."

Why Humanists Matter in AI Ethics

When asked what he brings to these technical conversations as a novelist and medievalist, Holsinger's answer cut to the heart of why the humanities remain essential in our algorithmic age. He discussed his current project — a book or series of essays on AI and the arts

— and identified what he sees as one of the most pressing yet polarizing questions: the role of AI in artistic creation.

"With all the work on AI and ethics and evil robots and the human rights of sex bots and all these kinds of questions," he said, "to me one of the most interesting pressing questions at the moment is the role of AI in the arts."

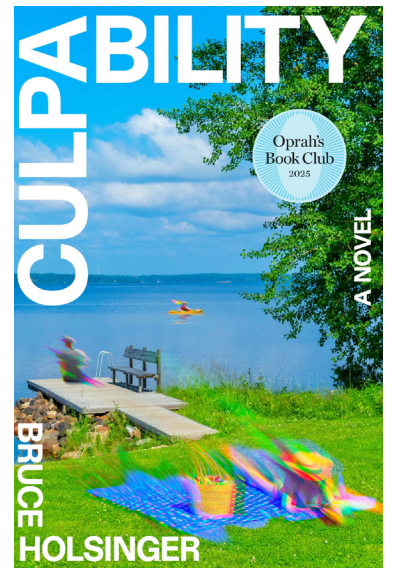
The debate is "polemically divided," he noted. On one side are those who view generative AI as "the antithesis of art" — corporate technology crammed down our throats. On the other are artists like Sheila Heti, who published a *New Yorker* story co-written with an AI, or Trevor Paglen, a MacArthur Fellow who uses algorithms to critique surveillance and algorithmic injustice. "To me, one of the most interesting things to write about is when people disagree fundamentally on something," Holsinger observed. What makes his perspective valuable is the capacity to explore moral ambiguity through narrative.

The Inefficiency of Art

One exchange during the Q&A crystallized Holsinger's argument for why human creativity cannot — and should not — be made efficient. An attorney described his law firm's adoption of AI for document review and contract generation, then asked: "As a writer, when you're writing, why not just put your characters, your story, your premise, your setting into the model? Wouldn't that save you a lot of time?" Holsinger's response was immediate: "We are in very different worlds because why would I want to be efficient in creating a story and in creating art? I love getting lost, I love making mistakes, starting over, screwing up, writing myself into a wall. I love it."

He drew on his background as a classical clarinetist: "You do your scales, you do your études, you practice hours and hours and then one moment you create something really beautiful, a beautiful duet or a piece of chamber music in performance. And so efficiency is the last thing I want." *Culpability* went through multiple complete rewrites — from third person to first person, from multiple perspectives to Noah's singular voice. Each "inefficient" revision brought Holsinger closer to the voice that could embody his theme: Noah's obliviousness mirrors our collective mystification before AI systems.

"I've arrived at this voice that mirrors my own relation-



ship to artificial intelligence," he explained. "Like, I just have no idea what is going on. And we are all buffoons, maybe not people in big tech, but the rest of us are all mystified."

The Discovery That Cannot Be Automated

During the discussion, an audience member observed that AI's efficiency risks eliminating serendipitous discovery. "There's so many things that we find in the old way of reading," they noted. "You happen across something else that sends you off in a different direction. AI is so efficient at driving to an answer that you don't see the tangential things that can be the most interesting things."

Holsinger agreed emphatically, describing the core practice of literary studies: "Taking a passage of literature and looking at it and thinking about it and then writing about it. And often we don't have the breakthrough and then write it up. The writing is the discovery." This process — inefficient, wandering, prone to dead ends — produces insights that cannot be generated by prompt and response. "It's isolating a rhyme or a particular line or word or a stanza that will just be circling around very suspiciously for a while until we figure it out, right? It's a very inefficient process, but it also is full of discovery and gives us the potential to learn something about ourselves and about the text that we're studying, the society that created it." The "coming tragedy of large language models," he warned, is that "they will circumvent so many of those processes of discovery."

Teaching in the Age of Brain Rot

Holsinger's concerns extend from the novelist's desk to the university classroom. Like educators at every level, he's

WRITERS IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM
The Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences presents

**AI, Ethics, and Imagination:
A Conversation with
BRUCE HOLSINGER**

Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English,
University of Virginia

**MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026
7:00 P.M.
DABNEY LOUNGE**

Holsinger specializes in the literature and culture of the medieval world, with additional interests in historical fiction, modern and contemporary theory, the history of the book, and premodern religious cultures. His latest novel, *Culpability* (2025), a family drama about moral responsibility in the age of artificial intelligence, is the 116th selection of Oprah's Book Club and hailed by Oprah Winfrey as "a must-read for all generations." He is the author of multiple other works of fiction and nonfiction, and his essays and reviews have appeared in publications including *The New York Times* and *Vanity Fair*. A recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Holsinger is also the editor of the quarterly journal *New Literary History* as well as a frequent instructor at WriterHouse, a nonprofit in Charlottesville.

Caltech

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The event was held in Dabney Hall. (Photo: Camilla Fezzi)

grappling with ChatGPT’s impact on student learning. The initial panic about plagiarism has evolved into something deeper: “cognitive rupture.” “These great processes of reading and writing, putting words together in sentences, sentences into pages, pages into papers or books or whatever, those go back so long and I’m really worried about the efficiencies of AI just destroying that, destroying

parts of our growing brains.” He shared a poignant observation from a sixth-grade teacher: “What she misses most is the weirdness of young minds, the bizarre stories they’d come up with.” When students use AI to write papers, that weirdness — that essentially human creativity — disappears. His proposed solutions are decidedly analog: more in-class writing, “labs for writing” with snacks

and structured reading time, a return to attention as the scarce resource. “It’s really about attention more than anything else,” he concluded.

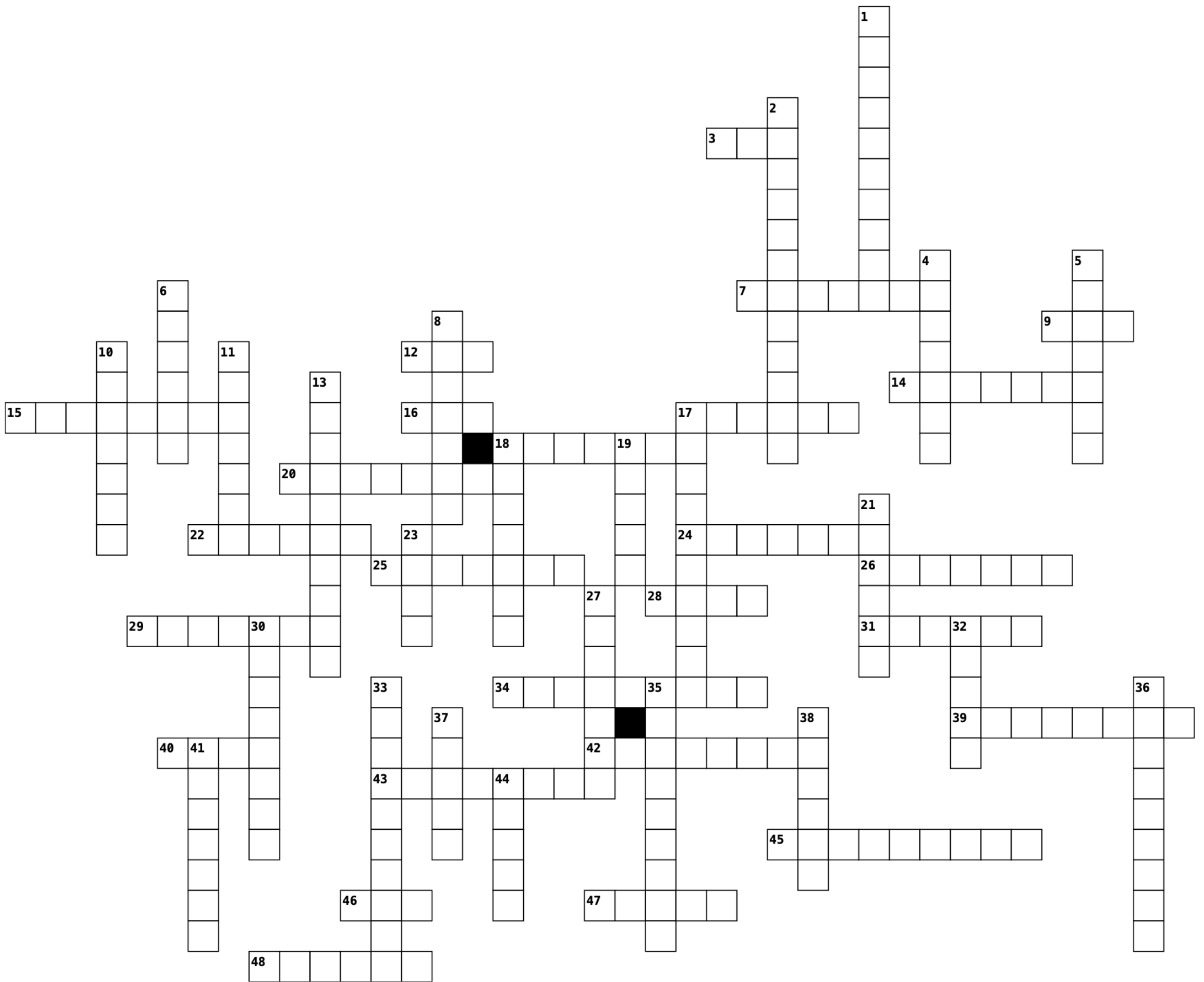
The Human Algorithm

What emerged from this evening at Caltech was not a Ludite rejection of technology but a defense of human processes as essential to both ethics and art. As we stand at the preci-

piece of an AI-saturated future, we need technologists to build the systems and ethicists to constrain them. But we also need storytellers to help us understand what it means to be human in an age of machines — to preserve the inefficient, wandering, beautifully flawed processes of discovery. Bruce Holsinger, with his double life as a medieval scholar and contemporary novelist, reminds

us that the humanities are not a luxury in the age of AI. They are essential infrastructure for remaining human.

Bruce Holsinger’s Culpability is available now. The event was part of the Writers in Residence Program presented by the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences at Caltech.



Caltech Crossword Challenge

Alumnus Laurent Itti (PhD ‘00, CNS), now a Professor of Computer Science, Psychology, and Neuroscience at USC and continuing reader of the *Tech*, reached out to share his son’s Caltech-themed crossword puzzle. Credit to Jean-Luc for supplying us our first puzzle in what feels like forever. Enjoy!

Across

- 3. Gen Z laughing term
- 7. Tatooine film location (country)
- 9. 2pi
- 12. City where the oldest university in the world is
- 14. Last tsar of Russia (first name)

- 15. Alfred Nobel’s first invention
- 16.-....
- 17. Most used Linux distro
- 18. Ubuntu 26.04 animal
- 20. “TV rock”
- 22. California inland sea
- 24. Scale using log₁₀
- 25. Most used OS
- 26. Lightest solid on earth (99.8% air by volume)
- 28. Animal unicorn is based off
- 29. First president of Texas
- 31. White Sands mineral

- 34. Last element in periodic table
- 39. Jail that “you can get in, but you can never get out”
- 40. Covered in Fe₂O₃
- 42. Morocco ruling dynasty
- 43. _____ Bros. Bagels (in Pasadena)
- 45. First Mars Rover
- 46. University that thinks they’re better than Caltech (they’re really not)
- 47. ~70.8% water, ~29.2% dirt
- 48. ~21% of air

Down

- 1. 1984 Olympic Games city

- 2. English pig’s blood dish
- 4. Welsh capital
- 5. Berber language
- 6. Scottish national dish
- 8. 2nd language on Rosetta Stone
- 10. OpenAI
- 11. Coming to _____ (movie)
- 13. Coding with AI
- 17. Most Caltech pranksters were _____
- 18. Caltech café
- 19. Artemis rocket
- 21. _____ trees on campus (fruit)
- 23. Last Chinese dynasty

- 27. Caltech physics professor, “the Great Explainer”
- 30. One of the elements in ballpoint pen
- 32. Most popular PC game launcher
- 33. *Star Trek* ship
- 35. Oldest surviving Linux distro
- 36. John Harvard studied there
- 37. French word for genius
- 38. F=ma
- 41. Most used airport
- 44. Gibraltar old name (Jabal _____)

Robert Indiana's *LOVE* to Join The Huntington's Collection

Emily Yu
Culture

Robert Indiana's *LOVE*, one of the most recognizable works of 20th-century American art, is set to be part of The Huntington's permanent collection later this year. Originally created as a drawing in 1964, *LOVE* turned the everyday word into an iconic symbol. Today, there are more than 50 *LOVE* sculptures installed worldwide.

"We are deeply grateful to Terri and Jerry Kohl for their generosity in making this acquisition possible," said Karen R. Lawrence, president of The Huntington. "Jerry believed *LOVE* belonged in a place where it would be seen and experienced by millions of visitors in the years leading up to the Los Angeles Olympics, during the games, and far beyond."

When *LOVE* was selected for a Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) holiday card in 1965, it became one of the museum's most popular designs and introduced the motif to a wide audience. Following the card's success, Indiana adapted the design into sculpture, and the image was later reproduced on a U.S. postage stamp, helping

to make it one of the defining images of postwar American art and a symbol of the "Love Generation" associated with 1960s counterculture.

Born Robert Clark in 1928, Indiana attended the art program at Arsenal Technical High School in Indianapolis, where he graduated as valedictorian. He then served for three years in the U.S. Air Force before studying at the Art Institute of Chicago under the G.I. Bill. Later, he attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and the Edinburgh College of Art.

Indiana became a major figure in postwar American art and was closely associated with the Pop Art movement of the 1960s, though he rejected the label, once saying, "I was the least Pop of all the Pop artists." He has often been described as an unconventional Pop artist because his work incorporated autobiographical references and symbolic associations more directly than much of the movement's commercial imagery.

Raised in the Christian Science church, where he recalled seeing the phrase "God is Love," Indiana drew on early associations with words and colors, including the red Phillips 66

sign at the gas station where his father worked. His work explored language, American identity, and personal history, and is held in major collections including MoMA, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the National Gallery of Art, and Tate Modern.

Although *LOVE* brought him international recognition, its popularity also overshadowed much of his broader practice. Indiana eventually left New York City for Vinalhaven Island in Maine, where he lived for the rest of his life and died in 2018 at the age of 89.

Indiana produced more than 50 editions of the sculpture, including versions translated into Spanish and Hebrew. The format also took on a political role in 2008, when he used the same stacked-letter design for *HOPE*, created in support of Barack Obama's presidential campaign. In a Christie's [lot essay](#) for a painting of *LOVE*, the auction house described the work's "endearing simplicity and omnipresence" as "a beaming source of light against dark, troubling times," adding that "Love is a command, and we as the viewer are to obey in any capacity we can."

"We encountered *LOVE* together in cities around the



Robert Indiana, *LOVE*. (Source: Tom Powel Imaging/The Robert Indiana Legacy Initiative Artists Rights Society, New York)

world, and it kept drawing us back," said the Kohls. "When the opportunity came to place it permanently, The Hunting-

ton felt like the natural home — where millions of visitors will experience it for generations to come."

A Midsummer Night's Dream at Ramo: Shakespeare with Heart and Laughter

Raquel Maldonado
Culture

On May 1, 2, and 3, Caltech EXPLiCIT brought another Shakespeare classic to the Ramo Auditorium stage: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It's always a pleasure to watch this play, no matter how many versions you've already seen. EXPLiCIT is made up of bright, fresh minds with a real interest in art and culture, and that spirit shapes both how they perform and how we receive them.

For anyone who doesn't know the play, Shakespeare weaves together three storylines in Elizabethan style: the Athenian nobles, the rustic craftsmen, and the fairies of the forest. Duke Theseus is preparing to marry Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, when Egeus drags his daughter Hermia into court, demanding she marry Demetrius, even though she loves Lysander. Hermia and Lysander run away into the woods. Helena, who is in love with Demetrius, betrays the plan and follows them. In the forest, the fairy king Oberon and his servant Puck meddle with a magical flower that makes sleepers fall in love with the first thing they see when they wake up. Predictably, things go gloriously wrong. Meanwhile, a troupe of amateur craftsmen rehearses a play for the Duke's wedding and gets pulled into the chaos too. By dawn, the spells are undone, the lovers are paired correctly, and Athens celebrates with a triple wedding, capped off by the craftsmen's hilariously botched performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

The cast is large, and the production leans into the play's comedy. Dylan King brings an elegant, noble bearing to Theseus, and Arabella Camuñez (ChemE '27, Venerable) is dignified and lovely as Hippolyta. Cara King plays Egeus as a tyrannical, self-serving father, and brings a sharp authority to the part. Grace Davis (Ch '27, Venerable) gives Hermia an intense, earnest center, and Max Gorbachev — who also directs — is passionate and romantic as Lysander. The real comic engine of the lovers' plotline, though, comes from Damian R. Wilson (Ph '27, Dabney) and Miranda Stuart ('05-'08, Dabney) as Demetrius and Helena. Their chemistry is wonderfully natural and authentic. Wilson, who is also one of the producers, is clumsy and bewildered, Stuart is funny and impulsive, and their scenes drew the warmest laughs of the afternoon. AwenRose Miller rounds out the Athenian court as Philostrate.

In the fairy world, Oberon — portrayed by Solvin Sigurdson (CDS G3) is intriguing and a little menacing, just as he should be. Todd Brun's Puck holds the stage with the kind of ease that only comes from real experience. Sara Magdalena Gomez (APh G1) brings freshness and beauty to Titania, and her four fairies, Kayane K. Dingilian as Mote, Tina Li as Peaseblossom, Emily Shi (Ch G2) as Cobweb, and Jedidiah (Jedi) Alindogan (CDS G3) as Mustardseed, each find small, distinct touches in their parts. Jonathan Chhang appears as Ophrys, and Shalev Sivan Shwartz, a third-grader making his theater debut, is sweetly memorable as the Indi-

an Boy at the center of Oberon and Titania's quarrel.

The mechanicals are, as always, in *Midsummer*, where a lot of the joy lives. Ankan Mukherjee (also one of the producers and EXPLiCIT's president) is hilarious as the bossy, self-important Peter Quince. Frank Aragon is a delightfully warm and big-hearted Bottom. Christopher Girt brings real comic timing to Flute; Tiffany Kim is endearingly anxious as Snug; K. Zachary Abbott is shy and sweet as Snout (and his Wall, in the play within the play, is a particular treat); and Eitan Levin is gentle and understated as Starveling. Their *Pyramus and Thisbe* is a small triumph of orchestrated chaos.

Gorbachev's direction leans firmly into humor and well-staged comic moments, which suits both the play and the company. Linda Muggeridge's costumes, Elena Scire's set, and Finn Swanson's lighting all serve the story without getting in its way, letting the language and the performances breathe. This is a student and community production, and its real currency is heart, not spectacle, and it has in abundance.

In the end, Puck leaves us with a question: was it all just a dream? For a quiet Sunday afternoon, EXPLiCIT gave us something better than a dream. They gave us a generous, laughter-filled few hours of shared joy. Congratulations to the entire cast, to Gorbachev for his direction, and to producers Mukherjee and Wilson for making it happen. As Shakespeare wrote in *The Tempest*, "we are such stuff as dreams are made on." Keep dreaming on our behalf.



The cast, from left to right: Max Gorbachev, Jonathan Chhang, Jedidiah (Jedi) Alindogan, Emily Shi, Dylan King, Kayane K. Dingilian, Tina Li, Shalev Sivan Shwartz, Sara Magdalena Gomez, Solvin Sigurdson, Todd Brun, Frank Aragon, Eitan Levin, Grace Davis, Miranda Stuart, Damian R. Wilson, Arabella Camuñez, AwenRose Miller, Cara King, K. Zachary Abbott, Ankan Mukherjee, Tiffany Kim, and Christopher Girt. (Photo: Raquel Maldonado)



The Indian Boy (Shalev Sivan Shwartz) is carried ceremoniously onstage, with fairy, musical, and bubble accompaniment. (Photo: EXPLiCIT)

What's With the Dead Grass on South Wilson?

Michael Gutierrez
News

Frequent passersby of southwest campus will have noticed a recent shift in the landscape along Wilson Avenue. Large areas of grass have turned brown and crispy, in apparent contrast with the springtime bloom of the surroundings (Figure 1). While it may look unsightly now, this is only the first step in a multi-year project by the Caltech Facilities department to restore this land's original, natural beauty.

Grass turf is typically imported in the form of pre-grown sod for landscapes found around Caltech and Pasadena — it does not grow natively in southern California. Caltech alone uses tens of millions of gallons of water annually to maintain its various lawns and greens

(Figure 2), many of which are non-functional (serving only aesthetic purpose). Despite irrigation accounting for less than 10% of total campus water usage, the Caltech Sustainability Council has identified it as one of the easiest targets for immediate reduction, thanks in part to the L.A. Department of Water and Power's turf replacement rebate program.

According to Caltech Buildings & Grounds Director Delmy Emerson, campus has been approved for approximately 90,000 sq. ft. at \$4 per sq. ft. to remove non-functional turf and transition the areas to sustainable landscape. This will save about 2 million gallons of water per year. LADWP's rebate program requires the project to be completed within 180 days of approval, Emerson explained, so the lawns on Wilson Ave. were sprayed with

grass killer to speed the removal. While this area is the current priority, there are several other locations on campus slated for topsoil makeover (Figure 3).

"The sustainable projects will have California friendly/drought tolerant plants, swale to capture rainwater, low fire rating plants, increase tree canopy, and low maintenance requirements," Emerson told the *Tech* (see Figure 4).

Max Christman, Assistant Director of Sustainability, added, "In the coming months, those spaces will be transformed with more trees, native vegetation, and natural features."

While the overall impact on campus water consumption is marginal, the new landscapes are a visible and symbolic step toward coexistence with the natural world, rather than fighting against it.



Figure 1. (Photo: Michael Gutierrez)



Figure 3. Map of campus areas planned to be transformed. (Image: Max Christman, Associate Director of Sustainability)

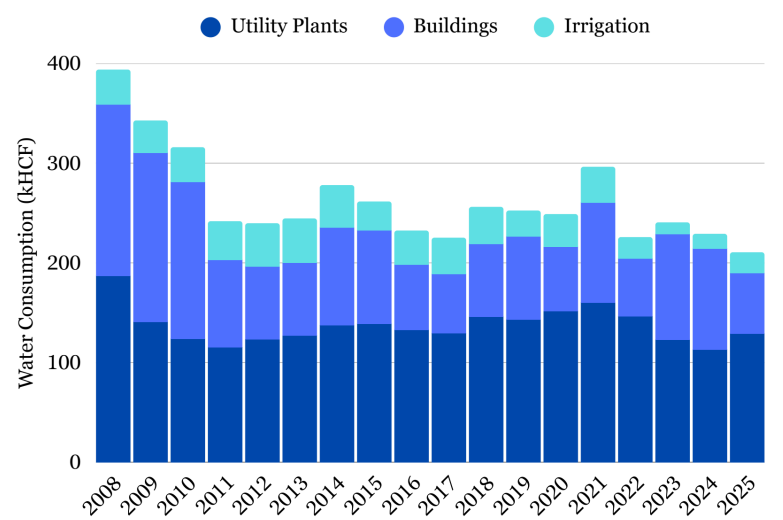


Figure 2. 100 kHCF = 78.4 million gallons. (Image: 2025 Caltech Annual Sustainability Report, p. 12.)



Figure 4. Some areas on campus, like the front lawn of the Audit Services and Institute Compliance Office on California/Wilson, have been finished already. (Photo: Michael Gutierrez)

Editor's Note: We want to hear your perspective!

We strive to represent every voice in the Caltech Community with fairness, accuracy, and impartiality in our news reporting. If you think we missed something, or just want to share your thoughts about a topic we've reported on, I encourage you to submit a Letter to the Editor!

Send submissions or contact the *Tech* editorial team at

tech@caltech.edu

Submissions are due at 12 p.m. on the Saturday before each biweekly Tuesday publication.

Spring Wildlife: Parenting

Jieyu Zheng
Column

As Mother's Day has just passed and Father's Day is coming up, this issue will talk about parenting in the nonhuman animal world. While all but one photo was taken off campus, a lot of the animals (mostly birds as I am a bird expert) mentioned in this article can be found in the adjacent Pasadena area, so keep your eyes out for spring activity!

One of the greatest missions in spring for many animals is to raise a generation of young and graduate them into independent life. This intense process spans from weeks to years depending on the species, and the demands on the parents are often extraordinary.

Parenting starts much earlier than when the child is born. For birds, building a nest is already part of the preparation process. The lining of nests is a multi-level project, involving different textures of materials for insulation and comfort. Around campus this season,

you can see ravens flying overhead with twigs in their beaks, dark-eyed juncos hopping around the (yellowed for good reasons) lawn collecting grass, and robins tugging at your dog's fur while it naps on the balcony. All of these collections are necessary!

Feeding is another important part of parenting. For many bird parents, while one bird continuously incubates the eggs (usually the mother), the other parent must hunt and gather food for the one staying at home. This becomes a direct test of hunting skill, but don't worry – the females have often already tested their partner's abilities before child rearing even begins. Females frequently receive gifts (usually food items) from males during courtship. Terns, for example, are known for their swift flights and dramatic dives into the ocean for hunting. If you see a pair of adult terns exchanging fish, that may actually be part of their engagement negotiation. For mammals such as seals, mothers must gain tremendous

amounts of weight in advance so they can later provide rich milk for their pups.

Then, when the young are born, some parents need to leave for extended hunting trips. This spring, I went to Hawaii to visit one of my target species, the Laysan albatross. These birds mate for life and rear only one chick each season. One parent may travel thousands of miles across the Pacific Ocean to search for food while the other stays behind to guard the chick. It remains a mystery how they navigate the open ocean for days or weeks, then return precisely to the same nesting colony and recognize their partner and chick among thousands of nearly identical birds. This is still ongoing research in the field.

Another source of parenting intensity comes from the sudden shift in behavior that can seem completely opposite to the animals' "normal instincts." If you have visited parks with ponds, you have probably noticed mallard ducks, the most widespread wild duck in the

world. Part of their popularity comes from their eagerness to exploit every feeding opportunity, from grass to discarded bread and even trash. When they see someone standing near the bank, they eagerly swim over while loudly quacking, summoning every nearby duck into a chaotic crowd, fully prepared to shove aside their conspecifics for a better chance at food. (In fact, classic studies of ducks feeding at ponds helped inspire early theories of foraging behavior and competition.) But once the ducklings hatch, the priorities completely change. The formerly loud and aggressive adults now guard their babies closely, float quietly beside them, and remain constantly vigilant while the ducklings chirp and enjoy the banquet.

The prioritization of the young continues even after they become juveniles. During this time of the year, there seem to be adult birds everywhere, but if you look closely, many of the rotund "adults" are actually juveniles still begging their par-

ents for food. The fox squirrels, almost as large as adults, will still cuddle to their mothers for milk. The new fledglings readily flutter their wings and chirp incessantly while following exhausted parents around. But parental tolerance lasts only for a limited time. Very soon, these youngsters become direct competitors for the same food resources, and the parents may fiercely chase them away from their territories if necessary. (Perhaps this is also how young scientists must eventually carve out their own niche and compete with their former mentors.)

In many parts of the animal world, both parents play important roles in raising the next generation. Parenting can involve construction work, food delivery, defense, sacrifice, and endless patience. And although the details differ across species, the underlying challenge feels surprisingly familiar: how to prepare the one you love to survive in a difficult world, and then eventually let them go.



A female red-winged blackbird is collecting nesting materials. (All photos by Jieyu Zheng)



Male Forster's tern (right) handing his partner a freshly captured fish (Huntington Beach area).



Mallard mother with her ducklings cuddled cozily next to her.



Just a month ago, Anna's hummingbird mother raised two fledglings on Caltech campus.



Laysan albatross parents and their chick (only child) of the season.



Hawaiian monk seal mother (left) and her pup.

Blacker Raises the Neon Pyramid

Damian R. Wilson
The Inside World

On the night of May 19, Blacker Hovse summoned students to quite the chimerical Interhove: Ancient Egypt by way of glowstick fever dream. The invitation arrived less as an announcement than an incantation — “The pharaoh’s curse beckons you” — calling partygoers to “flood the courtyard at 10pm sharp” for what it promised would be a “body thumping blood pumping rave inside the neon pyramid.”

The result calibrated for

maximal theatrical excess: pharaonic judgment, dayglo outfits, bass-heavy revelry, and the warmly absurd question of whether one’s heart was “worthy.” The beckoning call leaned into the usual Caltech-party register of mock-mythic grandeur, transmuting a courtyard party into a ritualized descent into neon antiquity.

The Interhove featured the promised neon pyramid, a shimmering deluge from a model Nile, eschatological wall art, and a fluorescent mummy’s tomb. (Photos: Damian R. Wilson)



Fleming Celebrates 2016 Nostalgia at “Flemchella”

Damian R. Wilson
The Inside World

On the night of May 16, Fleming House staged its own festival revival with “Flemchella,” a 2016/Coachella-themed Interhove that invited students to “Blast From the Past” in the Fleming courtyard from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. The announcement promised a return to something relatively precious: to flower crowns, festival fits, overexposed desert aesthetics, and whatever collective psychic residue still

clings to our shared concept of 2016.

Contrary to Blacker’s celebration and reinvention of antiquity, Flemchella ordered a different ritual: the communal resurrection of a year now distant enough to feel themed, but recent enough to feel faintly incriminating.

The 2016/Coachella-inspired stage was rife with symbols from the era, including Nyan Cat, rainbow poop emojis, dabbing unicorns, and an angelic Harambe (may he rest in peace). (Photos: Damian R. Wilson)



LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

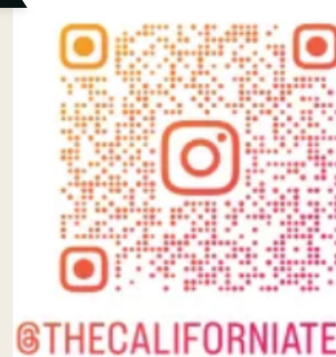
Tell us your opinions about things going on at Caltech with this new survey form on our website! You can submit any time, multiple times, about anything.



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Caltech Students in Boulder, CO: Apartment Hunting

Victoria Davis
Column

Many know that two CCE research groups are moving from Caltech to CU Boulder. This column will be a way that I keep the Caltech students (myself included) a part of the Caltech community as we finish our PhDs in Colorado. I recently went to Boulder, CO with my best friend Maria to explore the area and check out apartments.

Note to the reader: I wrote this article like a scientist with figures called out in the text. Don't hate me! Haha!

My journey began with a flight from Long Beach Airport to Denver. As we approached the Denver airport, the view from the sky was stunning! We glided over the Rocky Mountains that were dusted with snow (Picture 1). When we

landed, I was shocked to discover that I will soon be living again in a state that gets tornadoes (Picture 2)! The last time I lived in a tornado-prone state was when I lived in North Carolina. Maria and I grabbed our bags and took a shuttle from the airport, way out to a deserted looking area where all the rental car locations were. Originally, I had hoped to rent a cheap all-wheel drive Nissan Rogue at Routes Rental Car. The plan was that it would cost \$26 a day, and it would be ideal because Maria—a Nissan Rogue owner—would be the driver for our trip. I don't know how it happened, but we wound up paying A LOT more. We—along with every other person renting a car that day with us—some how got swindled into renting a Jeep! Everyone was being put into a Jeep, and sent out through the rental lot gate to-

gether. I sat there bewildered as Maria drove us through the line of Jeeps and we bounced our way onto the dirt road. Maria looked at me and said "they played you." She was right. But I wasn't the only one!

Onward we went with our GPS set for Boulder. As we left the rental car area, we spotted a strange rodent animal standing in the dirt. I snapped a picture of it (Picture 3), but it's not the best image. According to the internet, Denver has many Black-tailed Prairie dogs (Picture 4)! So cool to see new wildlife that we don't see at Caltech! Even when we ate dinner at Basta after touring five apartment buildings, we saw an adorable, tiny Desert Cottontail bunny (Picture 5). Desert Cottontails are often found near Chautauqua Park, but also roam around the town of Boulder. It had a cute white powder-pull tail!

A very delightful sight as we ate dinner on the outdoor patio and enjoyed the 70 degree weather.

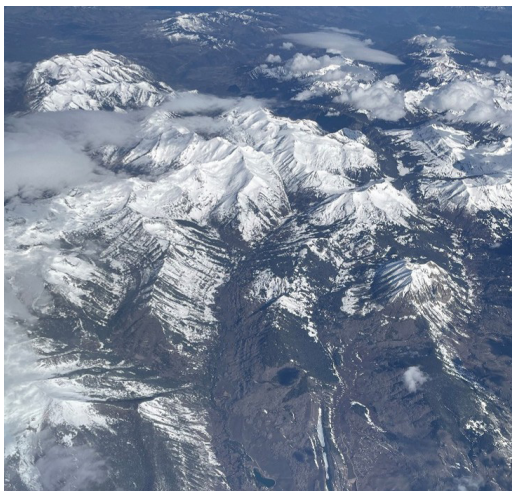
My first time visiting Boulder was a perfect glimpse into how unpredictable mountain weather can be. We certainly got a taste of it on our two-day trip! When we arrived, the weather was warm and bright—like any typical Los Angeles day. When we drove past the CU Boulder campus (Picture 6), you could see the blue sky, some clouds, and the mountains in the background. It was beautiful. The following day, we were hit with a snow storm (Picture 7)! In just a few hours, the town was freezing and blanketed in snow!

We visited another four apartment complexes on our second day, and then headed to the airport. Picture 8 captures the vibe of Boulder when we

were exploring different apartments. One resident had a welcome mat that read "Probably on a hike." Classic.

We did get a chance to explore Meow Wolf before our trip was over too (Picture 9)! Maria had been to the one in New Mexico, and wanted to explore the original one in Denver. I had no idea what I was walking into. It was a trippy place that's for sure (Pictures 10-11). I don't know how to describe it, but it was like a 90s-themed, interactive, artsy, playground for adults. It was a whirlwind of a trip, but we packed in a lot of good food, fun activities, and explored a bunch of promising locations for apartments. I'm pretty excited for our move soon and can't wait to share more about Caltech students' adventures in Boulder, CO!

All photos by Victoria Davis.



Picture 1. View of the Rocky Mountains covered in snow from the airplane window.



Picture 2. The shocking discovery that the Denver airport has tornado shelters everywhere.



Picture 3. Super pixelated image of a Black-tailed Prairie Dog in Denver, CO.



Picture 4. Better picture of a Black-tailed Prairie Dog from the Smithsonian Magazine.



Picture 5. Adorable fluff ball of a teeny tiny bunny.



Picture 6. View of CU Boulder campus on a Thursday in mid-April.



Picture 7. View of CU Boulder campus the next day (Friday) in mid-April!



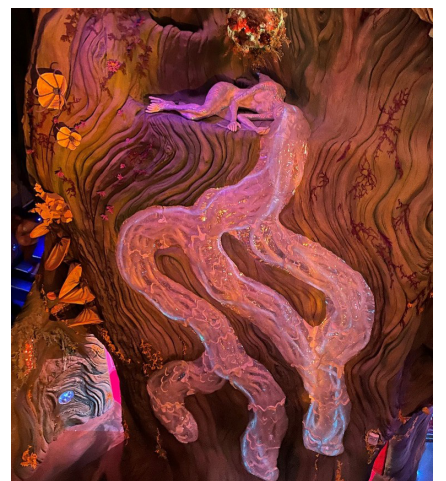
Picture 8. The residents of Boulder, CO appear to be outdoorsy.



Picture 9. Exterior of Meow Wolf in Denver, CO.



Picture 10. A trippy, yet colorful castle with dragons, gargoyles, and stormy skies inside Meow Wolf.



Picture 11. A pink mer-lady whose hair has melted into the tree trunk in a rainforest inside Meow Wolf.

2026 San Gabriel Valley Food Passport: Fourth Round of Reviews

Victoria Davis
Column

Hello Tech readers! Time for another round of reviews where I explore the San Gabriel Valley food scene with the 2025 MySGV Food Passport. There remains only a few places in Pasadena still to explore: Birria Master, Edwin Mills, O'Seyo Shabu Shabu, All India Café, and Star Leaf. Birria Master's hours are 5:30 PM to 11 PM, so its been a tricky place to find time for as the early bird I am! Edwin Mills is a place I tried to go on Valentine's Day, and then again with Kayane another day, but we got distracted by Bath & Body Works and a craft fair, so never made it. I am determined to go there before the passport expires though! Star Leaf is super pricy, so I probably won't try that out, but encourage Tech readers to go! I'll try to hit O'Seyo and All India next time. For this issue, Kayane and I went to Lee's Hoagie House again (haha!) and explored the South Pasadena Farmer's Market.

All photos by Victoria Davis.

Lee's Hoagie House

Kayane and I already tried this one out, but it was so good we went again! This time I wanted to try their \$6.99 burg-

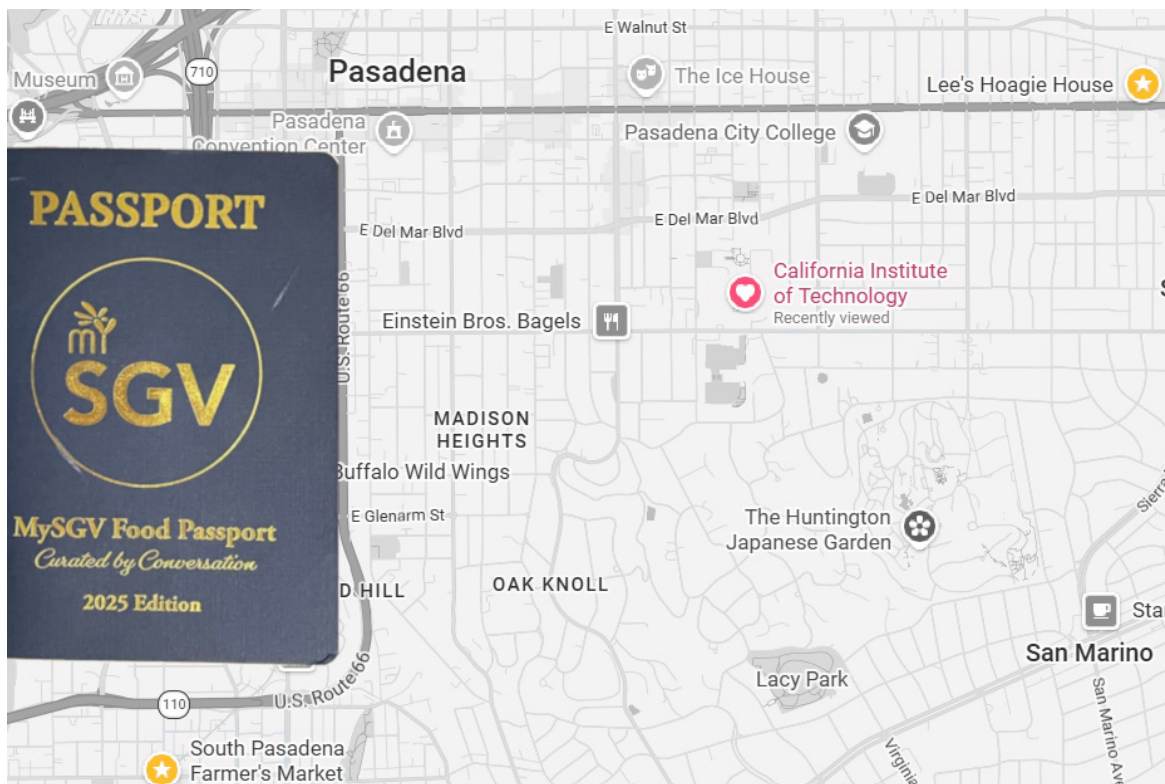
ers (delish!) and Kayane tried their California Cheesesteak. Kayane made the smart decision to order a hoagie—Lee's best menu items. I was curious about their burgers—I love a good cheeseburger—and it was great! The 1/4 lb Cheeseburger comes with lettuce, tomato, onions, pickles, and homemade thousand island dressing. Yum! I will admit, though, that their Meatball Hoagie was WAY better, so next time we go I'll try another hoagie on the menu. Kayane loved her sandwich. The California Cheesesteak is made with 8 ounce rib-eye steak with mushrooms, bell peppers, onions, and provolone cheese. It was another stellar lunch at Lee's. Can't wait to go again! Kayane and I hope to become regulars!

Cairn Cookies – South Pasadena Farmer's Market

Passport description: "Lisa Liu is the founder of Cairn Cookies, crafting nostalgic, flavor rich treats that bring comfort and joy to the San Gabriel Valley"

Passport benefit: Buy 6 cookies, get 6 cookies free

After work one Thursday, Kayane and I drove to the South Pasadena Farmer's market! It's a tiny farmer's market held at odd hours on a Thursday, but it was an adventure we were



excited to embark on. The motivation? Cookies. According to Cairn Cookies in the SGV Passport, these cookies can only be purchased at the South Pasadena Farmer's Market. I was surprised their business doesn't have an address! So we finally made a plan to go to the farmer's market in search of these cookies. We found them! They

had SO many cookies; it was my version of heaven. I bought six cookies: Mint Chocolate Chip, Christmas Cookie, Peanut Butter Pretzel, White Chocolate Macadamia, Honeycomb Toffee Brownie, and Chocolate Peanut Butter Cup. Then I got another six of the same flavors FREE. It was glorious. Kayane and I also stopped by an Ital-

ian booth, Japanese booth, and the McGrath Family Farmer's booth. Kayane bought squid ink pasta and tiny vegetables. I bought Sweet Miso Dressing. It was a good day of exploring new foods and flavors to add to our kitchens. You should definitely check out the South Pasadena Farmer's Market, and pick up some Cairn Cookies!

Lee's Hoagie House



Cheeseburger and fries by Lee's Hoagie House.

Cairn Cookies



Honeycomb Toffee Brownie by Cairn Cookies.



California Cheesesteak by Lee's Hoagie House.



Kayane happily purchasing tiny vegetables and edible flowers at the South Pasadena Farmer's Market.

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- be willing to be displaced in time
- bring your own world
- strictly follow temporal paradox protocols
- be available for deployment on the evening of Friday May 29, 2026

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How Did I Learn to Say Goodbye?

Camilla Fezzi
Inner Voices

The first thing you learn is how to say goodbye.

Again. And again. And again — until the word frays at its edges like the hem of a coat worn through too many winters.

At the beginning, it hurts the way only first wounds can hurt: cleanly, without anesthesia, without warning. You are still small enough that the suitcase looks enormous beside you. You do not yet realize that each farewell is quietly rearranging the furniture of your soul — pushing the armchair of childhood into a darker corner, drawing curtains across rooms you used to play in.

You are a girl in a school uniform, somewhere in that tender country between childhood and whatever comes after, when you first understand the terms of the bargain. To follow your dreams, you must leave the country that bore you. So you pack a backpack — books with cracked spines, notebooks full of half-thoughts in blue ink, ambitions far too vast for canvas — and you carry them out the door as though they weighed nothing at all.

For me, travel has always been a swing in an empty garden. You climb on. The chains are cold in your palms. You push off with your legs, and the world tilts — sky, then earth, then sky again — and you hurl yourself into the open air with no real notion of where the arc will set you down. And still, you love it. Because that slow oscillation is the closest thing to flight a human body is permitted. For one suspended heartbeat, the whole world holds its breath for you.

But once you have tasted that altitude, the earth feels smaller. You find the ground unforgiving; nothing there can match the adrenaline of the apex, nothing there can speak the language your blood has just learned.

That is how it began. My first crossing into America — the long flight, the cold light of an unfamiliar airport, the strange new alphabet of street signs. Then the United Kingdom, with its rainy punctuation, its red buses moving through grey afternoons. Then the scattered cities of Europe, each a new height in the swing's arc, each one teaching me a different way to be a stranger.

Travel gives you exactly the rush you were searching for. And yet, it asks for everything in return: you may never truly look back. And still I go.

I carry their voices with me like relics sewn into the lining of my coat. My mother's voice was warm as bread just out of the oven. My father's voice, low and steady, the kind of voice you could build a house against.

My brother's voice, light and teasing, was always one breath away from laughter. The small, indignant bark of my dog, who never understood why suitcases existed. And the dark, patient eyes of my horses saying goodbye, or perhaps only until soon, in that wordless language

animals seem to know better than we ever will.

On my first true departure — my first academic pilgrimage — I tried to do it the way they do it in films. I walked through security. I turned

around. I waved until the people I loved became silhouettes, then specks, then nothing at all — until the crowd swallowed them whole and the fluorescent lights of the terminal washed everything flat and pale.

That was the first time. After that, I learned to fold the ache inward, to seal it shut behind the ribs. I learned the quiet alchemy of turning grief into momentum. There are students — international ones, American ones, all kinds of ones — who keep returning home because something inside them still hums with belonging. A steady summoning. A homeward gravity. The pull Dante once gave a name to, when he wrote of exile as a wound that never quite closes, of bread that tastes of salt in another's house.

I have never known that pull.

What I have known is the opposite hunger: the longing for altitude, for sky, for distance from anything I might be tempted to call normal. Because the moment a place begins to feel normal, it also begins to harden. Into routine.

Into tedium. Into the slow terror of becoming rooted — of having my wings folded neatly and put away in a drawer that someone else will eventually lock.

To belong, I learned early, is to give a place permission to hurt you. Trusting is to hand someone the map of your softest country and hope they do not march across it in heavy boots. So, I built a smaller country inside myself, one with no borders open to visitors, and I have lived there ever since, alone but unbreeched.

And so I learned to say goodbye. I straighten my neck. I straighten my back — always aching, always carrying something invisible and heavy — and I walk. I walk toward the next gate, the next adventure, the next bright illusion that I half-suspect will dissolve like sugar in my hands the moment I try to hold it.

I told myself I had to go. I had to do the research. Build the profile. For what? I asked it like a prayer with no listener, and I answered it with another goal, and another, and another — each one a stepping stone in a river that has no other shore.

Because the truth — the thing I was actually chasing through every airport, every acceptance letter, every fluorescent-lit library at three in the morning — was simply a sense of belonging. The kind of belonging that lets you set down your keys at the end of the day and trust the table to still be there in the morning. And I have not found it. I no longer believe I will.

So I learned to say goodbye.

And adventure by adventure, each one took a small, careful slice of my heart, until now there is only the cool architecture of the next plan, the next

task, the next step forward.

And then, without warning, memory ambushes me. It comes in fragments, always the corners, the edges, the small holy details that no photograph ever bothered to capture. My father, fresh from the shower — too much aftershave, too much man, a bathroom floor always somehow flooded in his wake, as if he carried small weather systems with him wherever he went. The faint, comforting chaos of him.

My mother's chenille robe, impossibly soft against my cheek when I would press my face into her shoulder. The scent of roses, yes — but beneath the roses, something the perfume could not name. The scent of mother. The scent that means home in a language no dictionary has ever printed.

My brother's gentle voice, always armed with a joke or a tender, animated sermon about football, his eyes bright with the kind of certainty only older brothers can carry. His hands inexplicably, eternally damp; I am a biologist, and I have given up asking why.

The velvet ears of my little dog, framing eyes so dark and so kind they seemed to hold ancient knowledge. The way he would curl beneath my desk while I studied, his small ribs rising and falling, his snoring the most loyal soundtrack a girl could ask for. How the room felt incomplete without that soft rhythm. How silence, since then, has never sounded quite the same. And Orchidea — my mare, now in her quiet retirement, grazing somewhere in a field I can only visit in my mind. The smell of her — hay and sun-warmed leather and that sweetness of horse, which is the smell of childhood for anyone who has ever loved one. The way she would lower her great head into my chest, trusting me with the most fragile gesture in the animal world.

My uncle, forever ready with a punchline, forever conducting his gentle, stubborn conspiracy to slip me one more glass of something — wine, amaro, whatever the occasion offered — laughing as he poured, as though laughter itself were the real drink.

To all of this, every single day, I say goodbye.

It repeats in my head like a litany. Like a small bell had rung in an empty chapel at dusk, when no one was listening but the dust in the air and the long shadows on the floor. And with every chime, another fragment of my heart loosens, lifts, and is carried off — somewhere I cannot follow, somewhere I am not yet brave enough to call home. The swing is still moving. I am still in the air. The arc has not yet finished, and perhaps it never will.

And somewhere, far below, in a garden I left a long time ago, there is a small girl with a backpack too heavy for her shoulders, still waving — at me, at herself, at the woman she became — and she is smiling, just slightly, as though she already knew.



(Photo: Kim Smith)



(Image: Dreamstime)



(Image: Dreamstime)

CALTECH DANCE CLUB PRESENTS

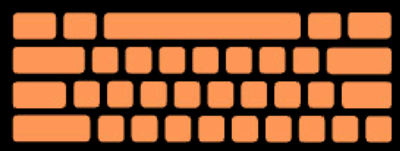
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The Strange Attractor — Did Caltech Host the World's First Successful Gathering of Time Travelers?



TACIT House on 275 S. Hill Avenue, made time-traveling haven.
(Image: Kari Coleman)

Editor's Note: *What follows is an extract from an achronological artifact recently found on the steps of the Tech's Pasadena office building: an apparent dispatch from the future, inexplicably recovered in time for our May 19 issue.*

Damian R. Wilson ... From the Future?

Most parties don't become history. But the ones that do tend to share a quality: the people who were there can't quite agree on what happened, and the people who were not there can't stop wondering.

I am one of those who was not there.

The date in question was Friday, May 29, 2026, just as senior classes ended for the year on the Caltech campus. I had a conflict that evening with a Dabney House retreat. Twenty years later, I remain uncertain about what happened at the event I missed — though I have thought about it more than is probably reasonable, and spent no small amount of time wishing I had been able to attend.

It was advertised as a "time travel gathering." Stuart Candy, a futurist and Caltech Theater's artist-in-residence for the 2025-26 academic year, had begun the year with an "immersive futures jam": a workshop in which students, staff and faculty spent a weekend co-creating and staging possible Pasadenas, thirty years out. I took part in that October experi-

ment myself. Two decades on, I cannot say that we seem to be heading toward any iteration of 2055 imagined back then, but I remember the exercise as strange, generous, and joyously destabilizing.

This May gathering at TACIT House was conceived as both the closing of that arc and its inversion. Rather than asking participants in 2026 to inhabit possible futures, it asked possible futures to return the favor.

Time travelers from any year were invited, once only, for two hours on the evening of Friday, May 29. MIT had attempted something similar in 2005. Stephen Hawking tried it at Cambridge in 2009. Both, famously, produced null results.

What distinguished the Caltech version was not quite confidence, but framing. Candy and Kari Coleman, who hosted the event, kept using the word "experiment," and they meant it.

Spiros Michalakis of the Institute for Quantum Information and Matter (IQIM), who helped design the gathering, told me in a 2036 interview marking its tenth anniversary that the idea was less to issue an ordinary social invitation than

to construct a strange attractor — a region in epistemic space in which the present could interact with parallel futures.

"We were not guaranteeing this would work," Michalakis said. "We were seeking to establish conditions under which it could."

When I asked whether he thought visitors had come, he smiled.

"I don't know," he said. Then, after a moment: "I find it interesting that I don't know."

Others who attended have been only marginally more helpful. The basic contours of the evening seem stable enough: the emcee, Ahmed Best of Star Wars fame, was by all accounts luminous; the food and drink were good; the conversations were Caltech-intense; and the musical performances were, in the manner of good Caltech-adjacent programming, slightly more arresting than anyone had been prepared for.

After that, the accounts begin to shear.

Over the past six months, two dozen confirmed attendees have described the gathering to me. Their stories share a peculiar trait: none can be disprov-

en, none directly contradict one another, and yet they do not quite assemble into a single event.

A Caltech physics professor, then a postdoc, remembers meeting a man who quoted to her, verbatim, the final sentence of a paper she was still struggling to write — and that would not be published for more than a year.

A senior who remained at TACIT for the full two hours remembers witnessing a girl draw something elaborate on a napkin, hand it to one of the IQIM researchers, and vanish before anyone thought to ask whose child she was.

An alumnus of Lloyd House, now a structural biologist in Geneva, recalls a forty-minute conversation, mostly about his brother, with a woman whose accent he could not place. The woman, he says, knew things she had no way of knowing. At the end of their conversation, she pressed a coin into his hand and excused herself. He has kept it. He let me see it but not hold it, and asked that I not describe it.

"There were rules in play," one of my classmates told me. "Or maybe not rules, exactly. I

don't know what was happening. But there was a hidden logic to it."

Twenty years on, the myth has only grown. Physicists continue to debate its significance. As if it were some geeky Woodstock, far more claim to have been present than could possibly have fit at the venue.

Meanwhile, as I write, there is a gradually yellowing copy of the physical invitation in the Caltech Archives, and another at the Huntington Library — safeguards, the organizers said, to ensure that the coordinates of the gathering would remain available to distant future generations.

As far as I have been able to determine, the invitation remains open.

The *Tech* has always had a peculiar relationship with its own archives. So if this piece has somehow reached you before May 29, 2026, then the event registration link is at timetravelgathering.com. I cannot promise it works — but if it does, and if you can go, I hope you do.

Please tell me what really happened. I've been waiting decades to find out.

The California Tech Journalistic Principles

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All articles shall be clearly and explicitly labeled as either News or Opinion/Editorial.

News articles report on topics that have been thoroughly researched by Tech staff writers, and should be impartial to any one point of view. In a News article, the writer shall not insert their own personal feelings on the matter; the purpose is to let the facts speak for themselves. The Tech assumes full responsibility for all content published as News.

In contrast, Opinion articles (including Letters to the Editor) may be written and submitted by anyone on any topic; while the Tech will edit all published Opinions to ensure no wrong or misleading information, we do not otherwise interfere. Again, the role of the Tech here is to help the whole campus communicate their ideas and share their stories, not promote specific ones. Content published as Opinions do not necessarily represent the values of the Tech or our staff.

An exception to this is Editorials, which are written by Tech staff and represent official opinions of the Tech. Any information and sources in Editorials shall be held to the same standard as News reports, but there is no promise or expectation of impartial coverage.

Fair Reporting

All facts of major significance and relevance to an article shall be sought out and included.

If an assertion is made by a source about a specific person or organization, they shall be contacted and given a reasonable amount of time to respond before publication. In other words, no second-hand information or hearsay shall stand on its own.

Quotes and Attribution of Information

Facts and quotes that were not collected directly by Tech reporters shall be attributed. Articles shall clearly differentiate between what a reporter saw and heard first-hand vs. what a reporter obtained from other sources.

Sources' opinions are just that — opinions. Expert opinions are certainly given more weight, as are witness opinions. But whenever possible, the Tech shall report facts, or at least corroborate the opinions. A reporter's observations at a scene are considered facts for the purposes of a story.

Sources

All sources shall be treated with respect and integrity. When speaking with sources, we shall identify ourselves as Tech reporters and clarify why we would like to hold an interview. Sources for the Tech will never be surprised to see their name published.

In published content, we shall put our sources' quotes into context, and — as appropriate — clarify what question was being answered.

We always ask that a source speak with us on the record for the sake of journalistic integrity. We want our audience to receive information that is credible and useful to them. Named sources are more trustworthy than unnamed sources because, by definition, unnamed sources will not publicly stand by their statements.

That being said, we realize that some sources are unwilling to reveal their identities publicly when it could jeopardize their safety or livelihood. Even in those cases, it is essential that the Tech Editor-in-Chief knows the identity of the source in question. Otherwise, there can be no certainty about whether the source and their quotes were falsified. This also applies for Letters to the Editor and Opinion submissions to the Tech. If the author requests that their piece is published anonymously, they must provide a reason, and we shall consider it in appropriate circumstances. No truly anonymous submissions shall be published. Conversely, no submissions shall be published with the author's name without their consent. When we choose not to identify a source by their full name, the article shall explain to readers why.

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We strive for promptness in correcting all errors in all published content. We shall tell readers, as clearly and quickly as possible, what was wrong and what is correct.

Corrections to articles will be immediately updated on the online version of the Tech at tech.caltech.edu. If appropriate, corrections will also be published in the following Tech print issue.

Honor Code Applies

In any remaining absence of clarity, the Honor Code is the guiding principle.

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The California Tech #37 CalGuesser



Every issue we'll show you a different location on campus. Find the place and find the QR code hidden there to sign the log book and **win a fabulous prize, actually this time! Gift cards sponsored by CalGuesser Benefactor Kevin Kan, but only if you find it before he does!!!**

"On campus" is defined as the convex hull of the buildings shown on caltech.edu/map/campus.

The QR code will be hidden somewhere within or immediately around the pictured area.

TECH EDITOR'S CORNER

Dancing Towards Bethlehem

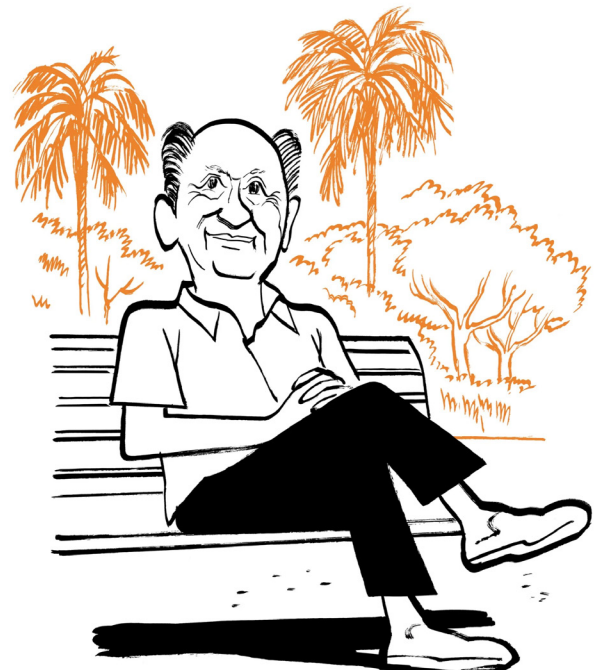
BY BILLY COLLINS

If there is only enough time in the final minutes of the 20th century for one last dance
I would like to be dancing it slowly with you,

say, in the ballroom of a seaside hotel.
My palm would press into the small of your back as the past hundred years collapse into a pile of mirrors or buttons or frivolous shoes,

just as the floor of the 19th century gave way and disappeared in a red cloud of brick dust.
There will be no time to order another drink or worry about what was never said,

not with the orchestra sliding into the sea and all our attention devoted to humming
whatever it was they were playing.



Billy Collins, 11th U.S. Poet Laureate from 2001 to 2003, as depicted by João Fazenda. (Image: [The New Yorker](#))