

## Artist's Statement

MY WORK IS A CONTINUOUS response to the heartbeat of our environment, and though this repetition may seem mundane on its surface, the world is always astonishing when one can find a genuine and deep connection to their surroundings. This kind of discovery requires a thoughtful focus on those things that are easy to overlook, the things that are fleeting and finite, the things that simultaneously belong to everyone and to no one: a trail of milkweed seeds journeying in the breeze, the eggs of a monarch under a leaf, the plants that emerge and create life under our hurried footsteps and heavy tires. These are the intimate words and phrases that build the language of a life well lived. It is through the meditation of small actions accumulating over time that I build my work and how I choose to tell my stories as an artist.

This issue's cover drawing, *Common Milkweed*, is an ink drawing on paper of the milkweed that grows each summer on the side of our garage in Cedar Falls. I built up my drawing in slow and persistent layers of ink, and at times, it felt more like I was brushing away layers of debris to reveal the plant rather than adding ink to a blank piece of paper. My process is slow and steeped in deep observation of the subject: a plant that is often seen as a nuisance and something to be ignored or to be pulled out of the ground. This perspective seems to be shifting as more people learn that multiple varieties of milkweed were stalwarts of the tallgrass prairie and that they remain key elements in restoration efforts.

Every spring and summer I anticipate these plants' fuzzy green shoots popping up between fallen leaves from the previous autumn and asserting their resilience by growing between the cracks in our driveway. They remind me of a familiar, although removed and distant, landscape that is still here, under our streets and houses, waiting to reemerge. I live in town in our nation's most biologically altered state, so I often feel far removed from the natural landscape, especially the vast and vibrant prairie

ecosystem as it was when it was stewarded by Native communities including the Meskwaki, Bah-Kho-Je, Očhéthi Šakówin, and Wahpeton. Yet milkweed remains a favorite to spot in my yard, neighborhood, and prairie preserves. It is a hope-filled plant that reminds us of the past and is key to our future.

— Angela Waseskuk  
*Common Milkweed*, 2020, Ink on paper