

**MICHAEL
CARRINO**

In Stefania's
Attic

—*dusk of an August Wednesday,
Brooklyn, New York,
in the year 1961*

The scent of jasmine incense
encircles what remains of daylight. The last
faint streaks drift through one rusted air vent. A dented
biscuit tin heaving with treasure is open on the scarred
oak table—flint, belt buckle, white button, thimble,
marble, wishbone, and more. It's Bedford Avenue. We are fourteen.
Both of us barefoot, waiting

for our bodies to ambush us
this afternoon. You offer one discrete desire. I choose
after my usual hesitation, the white button, grasp it, drop it, pick it up,
push it deep into my dungaree pocket.
You touch my foot. With so much time between us now
I cannot recall your face, but can retrieve your attic, that tin box
brimming with treasure.

The things we want
come by nature, but if necessary by some ambivalent design.
We were not brave, though I ached
for one of us to be brave. We allowed our lives
to remain the same. Yet, here is the white button
in a bosun's whistle box, under a scrum of paper clips, one
rubber band, two pencils,

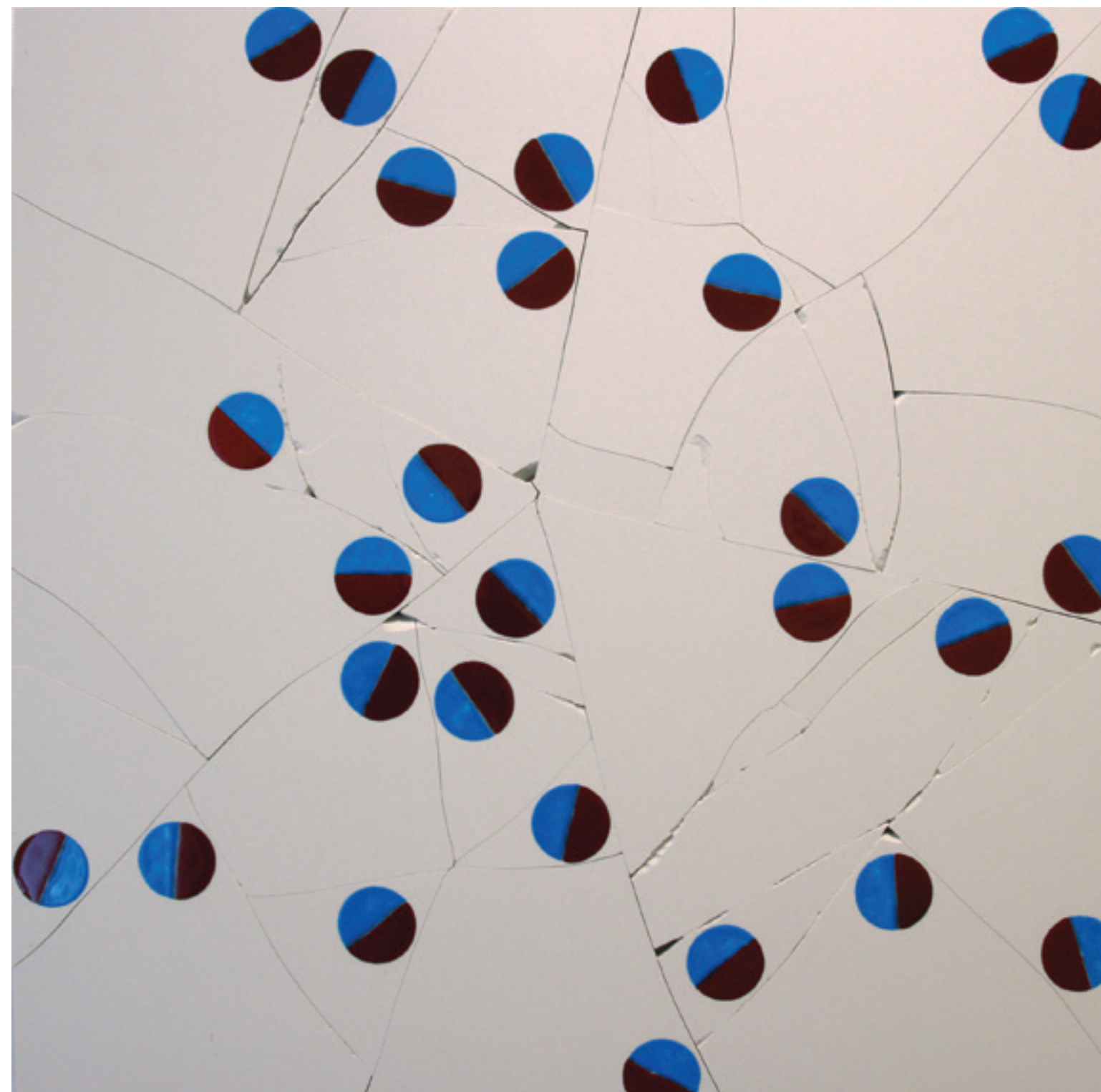
as I reach for my pen.
It is August, as it was August then. It's dusk
on the lake beach and chilly. Someone has lit coals in a fire pit.
Yesterday I discovered a small blue bottle of jasmine essential oil
at a gift shop, slipped it

into my blue jeans pocket
where it hid all day, until I found myself slowly twisting
its tight cap, releasing
one, four, ten thousand memories captive
within its combustible scent.

Michael Carrino is a retired English lecturer at the State University of New York Plattsburgh, where he was cofounder and poetry editor of the *Saranac Review*. His publications include *Some Rescues* (New Poets Series, Inc.), *Under This Combustible Sky* (Mellen Poetry Press), *Café Sonata* (Brown Pepper Press), *Autumn's Return to the Maple Pavilion* (Conestoga Zen Press), *By Available Light* (Guernica Editions), and *Always Close, Forever Careless* (Aldrich Press), as well as individual poems in numerous journals and reviews.

JIM MELCHERT

Vertices for Dancing #29, 2016
Glazed broken porcelain,
23 1/2 x 23 1/2 in



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