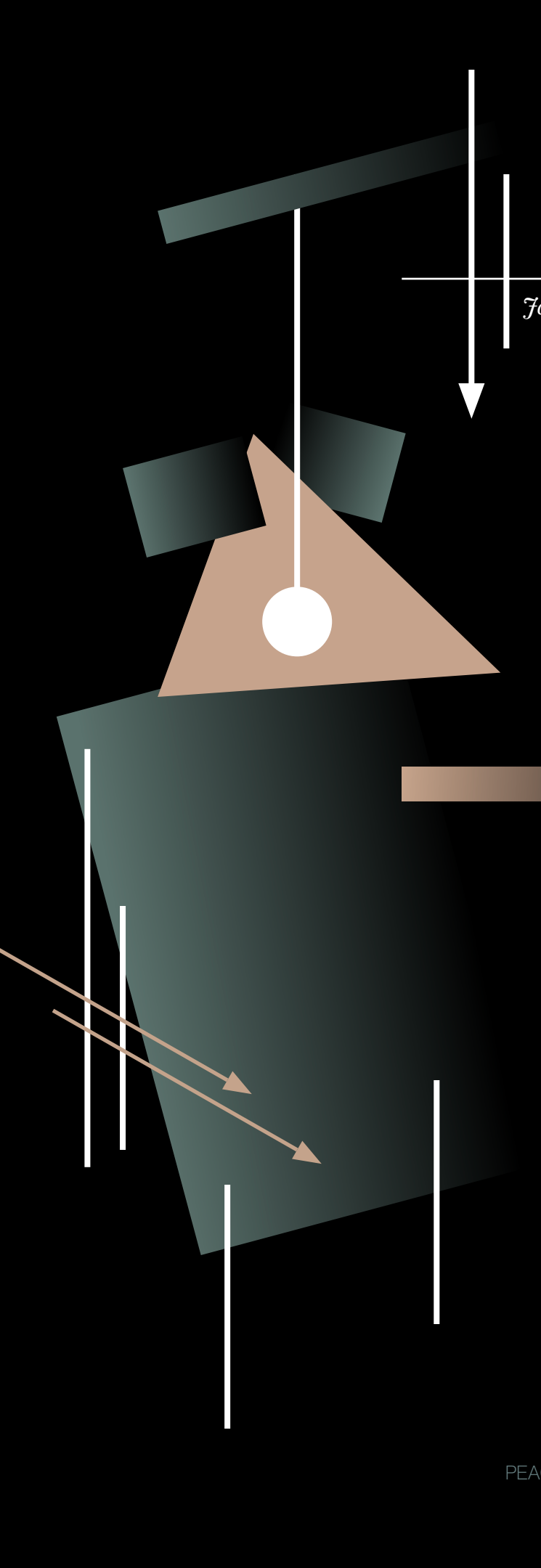


grolar bear

John Hoel


There is an animal approaching
 dragging her paws. She carries
 her emaciated frame like a child.
 Her movements never accidental,
 they heave in a breathless way,
 a way that I do not understand,
 (but I do want to understand.)
 She is fading into the woods now.
 Meanwhile I am lacquering mouseholes
 on the porch, it is five in the morning
 and the morning sun is not welcoming.
 Sprinklers spring to life and spray water
 on my sunk face. I wince at the sun
 and dry myself. When I close my eyes,
 I see the sun through the lids.
 It is so humid already,
 another hottest summer
 of hottest summers.
 This weather has me wanting
 to care more intentionally, like
 the animal teetering on the filament.
 Well, hold a fist to punch through
 the embers of light—that is what
 they say to do, isn't it? Direct action.
 I sink my teeth into the skin of the
 ripest fruit I have tasted all summer
 and its juices run down the corners
 of my mouth and chin, and down to
 the hot pavement below. I take my time
 walking to the bus stop. The routine
 is comforting and boring. At the end
 of the day, the bus home is the same,
 and I will always find myself there,
 on the bus, sipping lemonade from
 Styrofoam, unnoticed except when
 without bus fare. I find myself
 here again, inspecting the mouseholes.
 I see the recycling bin hurled and broken,
 bits of blue plastic and cardboard
 strewn. I don't pick anything up. I walk inside.