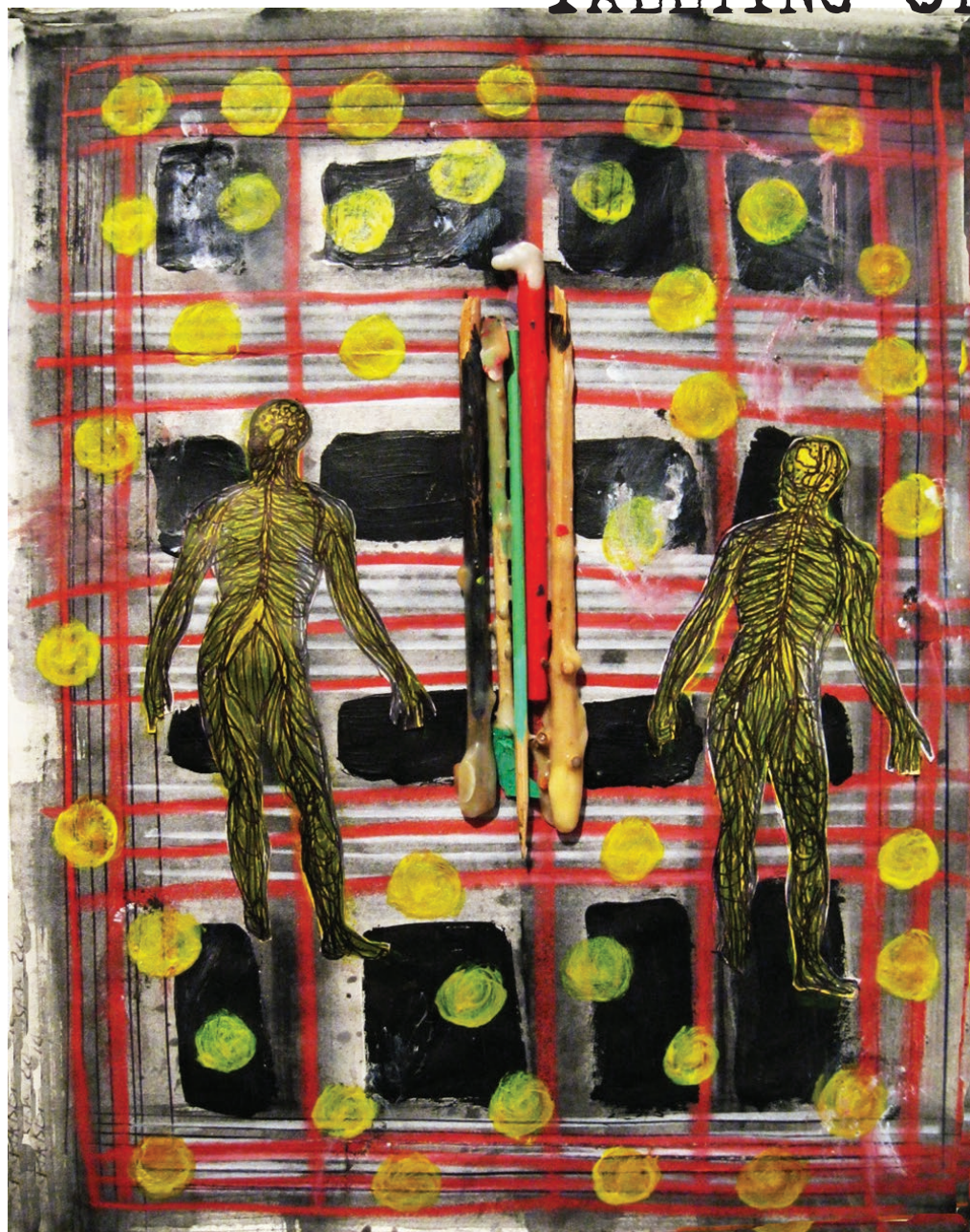


TALLYING UP



"RETURN THE BOTTLES IN THE BAG AND PICK UP A CASE."
FLINT FIRE CHIEF DAVID COX JR.

Brushing teeth with bottled water
we pour first into coin-sized cap

the plastic bottle's worth
some kind of debt to bank or state

or kindness of stranger.
Who owes whom what?

Our children
scour their teeth, swish

spit into black holes
of lead and rust.

The city reassures us.
We mark time

divide oranges into sections
cross out moons.

We tighten caps
over promises

collect the empties
each clear plastic bag

filled to the brim.