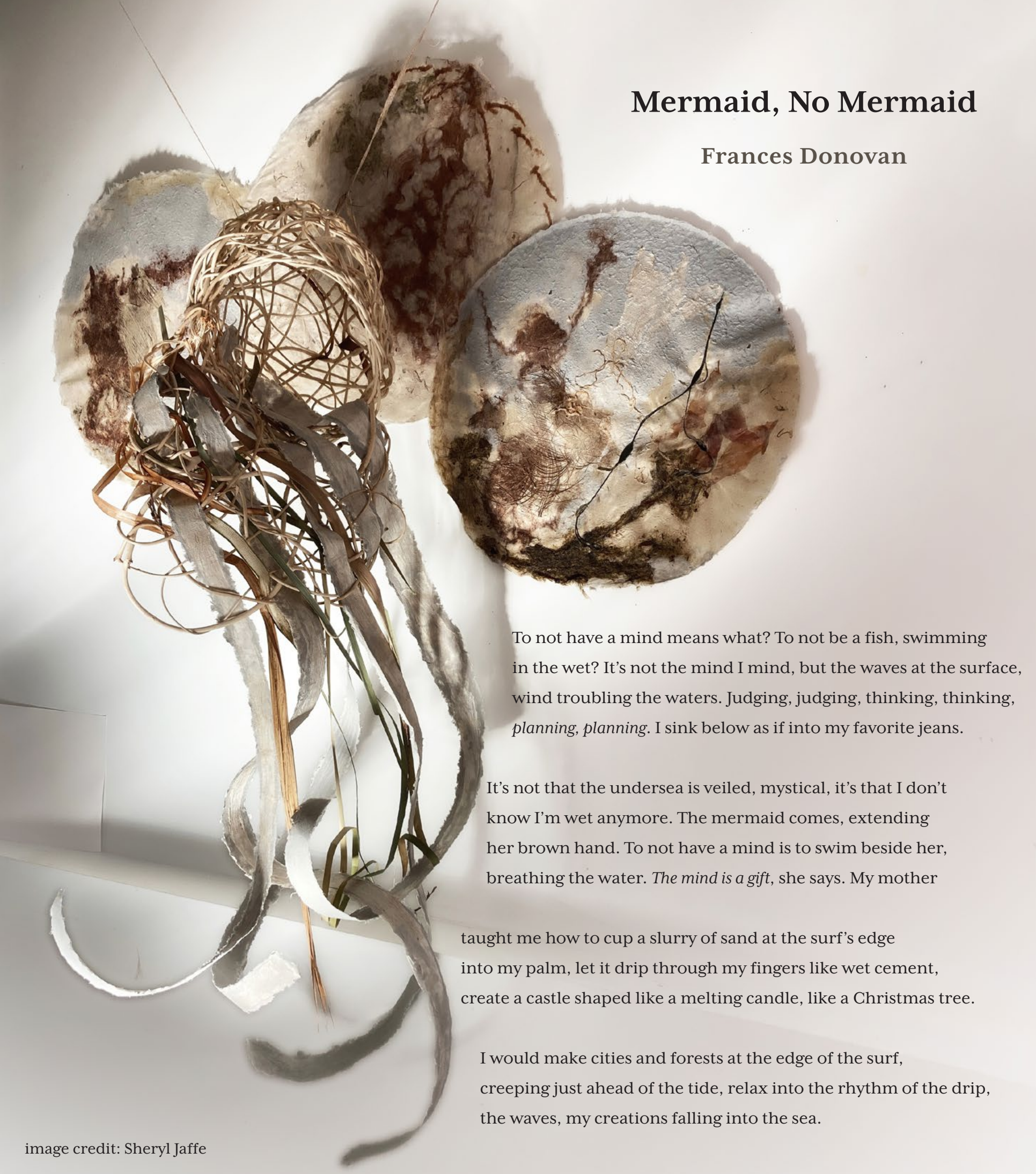




Mermaid, No Mermaid

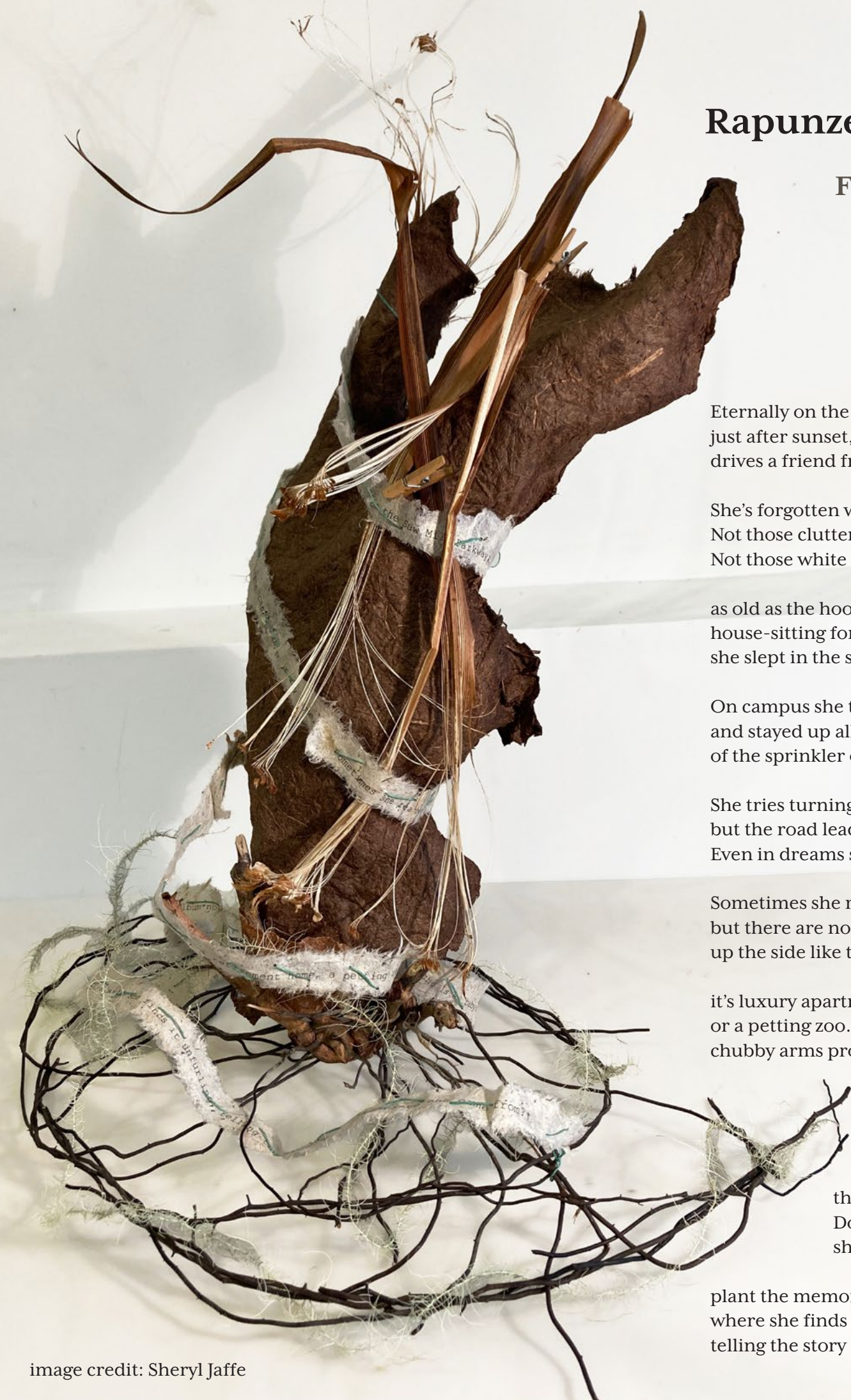
Frances Donovan

To not have a mind means what? To not be a fish, swimming in the wet? It's not the mind I mind, but the waves at the surface, wind troubling the waters. Judging, judging, thinking, thinking, *planning, planning*. I sink below as if into my favorite jeans.

It's not that the undersea is veiled, mystical, it's that I don't know I'm wet anymore. The mermaid comes, extending her brown hand. To not have a mind is to swim beside her, breathing the water. *The mind is a gift*, she says. My mother

taught me how to cup a slurry of sand at the surf's edge into my palm, let it drip through my fingers like wet cement, create a castle shaped like a melting candle, like a Christmas tree.

I would make cities and forests at the edge of the surf, creeping just ahead of the tide, relax into the rhythm of the drip, the waves, my creations falling into the sea.



Rapunzel Missing the Tower

Frances Donovan

Eternally on the Saw Mill Parkway,
just after sunset, Rapunzel
drives a friend from college home to Brooklyn.

She's forgotten what home is.
Not those cluttered rooms in the tower anymore.
Not those white plaster walls in dormitories

as old as the hoop skirt. That first summer,
house-sitting for a philosophy professor,
she slept in the study. She washed the dishes before she ate.

On campus she took LSD with her boyfriend
and stayed up all night, watching the shadow
of the sprinkler on the ceiling writhe back and forth.

She tries turning off the highway
but the road leads away.
Even in dreams she can't find her way home.

Sometimes she reaches the tower,
but there are no walls, just a spiral
up the side like the Guggenheim,

it's luxury apartments, a retirement home,
or a petting zoo. Or she is a baby sitting upright,
chubby arms protruding from a circle of frills.

A cat curls beside her.
She's in a dark cave of redwood
and carpet, a plexiglass bubble in the roof

that lets in one beam of California sun.
Does she remember this or does the photo
she saw in an album now yellowed with age

plant the memory in her mind,
where she finds it unfurling,
telling the story about this place she came from?