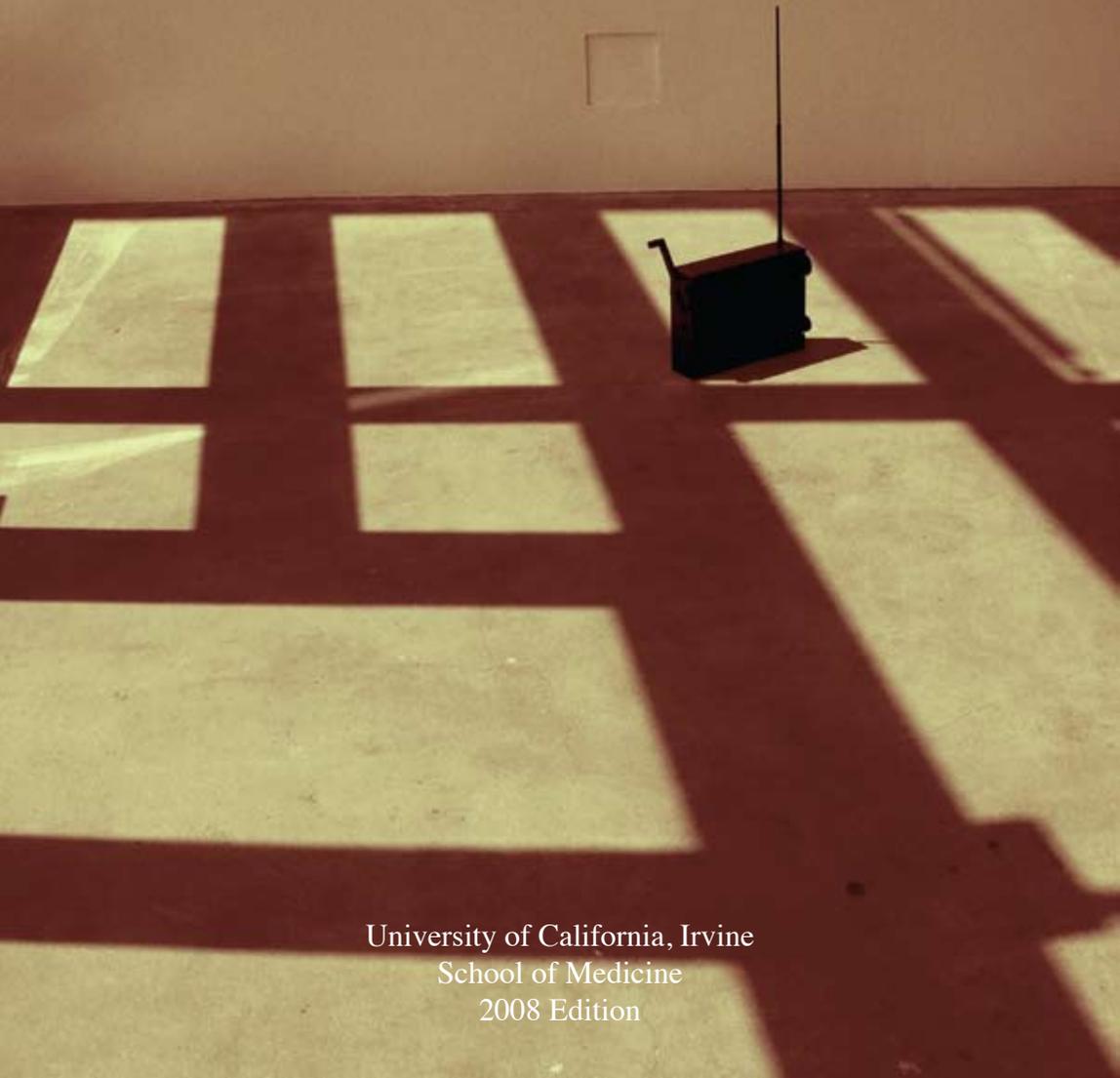


PLEXUS

Journal of Arts and Humanities



University of California, Irvine
School of Medicine
2008 Edition



Dear Reader,

The Plexus board would like to thank you for picking up our magazine. Being in the healthcare field can be demanding at times, emotionally and mentally, and many of us like to release our inner artist. We hope that you enjoy looking at, and reading, our work. Some of it was made to relax, some of it is to gain insight, and some of it is just for fun! This magazine is put together by a large board of Editors, over the span of a year, and collects hundreds of pieces of art from UCI School of Medicine students, faculty, physicians, employees, and even patients. All the work is judged by a fifty-person panel and then organized and published. And it's all organized by medical students who love art and the support of our faculty advisor, Dr. Johanna Shapiro (who also loves art)! We hope the contributed work has an impact and you'll keep your eyes out for our future editions. Thanks again dear reader!

Sincerely,

The Editors

The Editorial Board would like to recognize and thank the following sponsors for their unwavering support! **The School of Medicine Deans Office**, **The Office of Educational Affairs**, **The Office of Admissions**, **Last Year's Board**, who made us who we are today, **Carroll Rudy**, and Dale Fakuda from Printing Division Inc. Thanks!!!

PLEXUS

Journal of Arts and Humanities 2008

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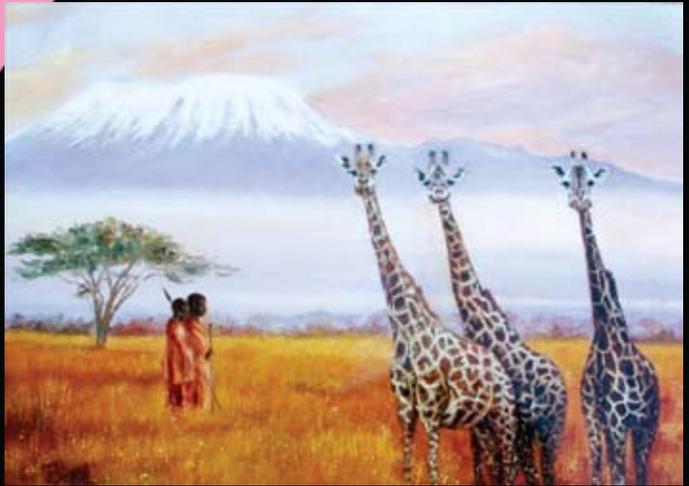
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Cover: *Black and White Radio* by Dr. Stefano Sensi MD, PhD,
Dept. of Neurology. Photograph

Inside Cover: *rock*, Mohammed Lenjavi, Research Analyst. Acrylic on canvas

Heights of Tanzania
Oil on Canvas
Betty Wong
Fellowship Coordinator



All That Will Fade Tomorrow

I miss you
Velvety touches so gentle
Soft milky ice cream droplets
Steady mechanical rocking
Then sobbing in rhythmic slow motion

And then I can only remember
That crazy warm winter morning
Eagerly sucking on lollipops
With you on my icy doorstep
That's when you whispered you need me
You asked me to hold you closer
And all the colors of day were so vibrant
Like tangerine kisses on water

-Victoria Millay, Class of 2009

Women of Tanzania
Oil on Canvas
Betty Wong
Fellowship Coordinator





Home Sweet Home
photograph
Tanni Thai
Financial Analyst

Reflections of a Pruned Medical Student

A passerby may wonder
Why wistful I may be,
Why envy haunts my vision
When I view the willow tree.

A passerby may marvel
And admire my molded form.
My every branch and twig and leaf
Has learned how to conform.

My sculptured shape is chiseled
By shears too sharp to see,
For pruning is the price I paid
For this topiary me.

Meandering through scented shops,
Lounging by a pool,
Watching goofy sitcoms,
And trying to look cool,

Crosswords and sudokus,
Magazines and jokes,
These were clipped and hauled away
By the garden training folks.

I don't begrudge the clipping.
It was my choice, to be sure.
But when the wind blows through the willow,
I feel its freedom's lure.

*-Allison Hill
Class of 2008*



Dancing Hearts
photograph
Jane Lee
Class of 2009



Untitled
photograph
Amy Tan
Research Coordinator



jaro; watercolor
Dr. Arnold Starr, MD; Dept. of Neurology

Untitled
photograph
Denny Le
Class of 2011



For Mr. Doe, On the Occasion of My Inadequacy

I thought this was magic.

I honestly believed
that diagnoses came inscribed on stone tablets,
psychiatrists could read minds
surgeons never hesitated
and blood was a beautiful thing

But it is your warmth
and not your blood, spilling out the chest tube
which soaks through my gown.
And when I can no longer
feel your pulse, I hear my own
break harsh along the shore of my perception

-Dr. Meghan Kaiser MD, Surgery Resident



Foz do Iguacu, photo. Daniel Nagasawa, Class of 2011



Untitled, photograph, Denny Le, Class of 2011

Thoughts on a Breakup...

He brings a whole vocabulary of meaning to the word "heartless."

Whenever I get on his nerves, he takes vengeance on my belongings, leaving them stained and damaged.

I rush out of his home, hastily replacing things in my frustration and confusion. Sometimes I wonder if he notices my discomfort and I can only hope that the next time will be less emotionally taxing.

I cannot stand his blank stares, his unshaven face, and his inability to express his feelings to me.

It is unfathomable that we once were strangers, now so intimate that I know his body better than my own, wandering through his veins, mirroring them to mine. And yet we return to frigid acknowledgement at the end of the night, leaving questions about his past unanswered forever.

His arm rests on my waist, the gentlest of caresses. I brush him aside impatiently, uncaringly, intent on proving my point in the face of his silence. He doesn't dare protest.

I hover over him, covering him tenderly. I am detaching myself from the horror of the previous hours, thinking of hearts unwillingly exposed, and how invariably, we have retained only a half-alive relationship.

... With Cadaver #5

— Charitha Reddy, Class of 2011

I reluctantly put down my organic chemistry book.

You know that was a bad sign.

The clock above the hematology microscope said 3:45,
a.m.

What it did not say, however, is that it was now Thanksgiving morning.

I started morning rounds early due to the abnormally high patient census in the hospital.

Working the graveyard shift for the third night in a row

Phlebotomy had surely become a mechanical process,

A reflexive motion requiring minimal thought.

Needles and sleep deprivation.

I came to room 213, knocked and opened the door.

“Good morning,” I announced my arrival and wheeled my phlebotomy cart into the room.

As I pushed back the curtain, still engrossed with SN2 reactions and polar aprotic solvents I noticed something: this room was sick.

I had come to notice over the days that the patient’s rooms took on the characteristic of the patient staying in it.

Maternity rooms were generally light and loquacious.

Postoperative rooms were sterile and heavily sedated.

This room was sick.

The air was heavy and thick and the white walls took on the yellow color of the patient’s jaundiced skin.

He was naked, only covered by a diaper and his sheets were soaked and crumpled up at the foot of his bed.

His breathing was heavy and wet and loud.

His back was crooked and stiff.

This room was sick.

“Hello sir” I said, “My name is Nick and I am here to draw your blood this morning.”

He did not answer but only stared into the middle distance.

His sclera were dark yellow. Almost brown.

I gathered my equipment.

His arms were stiff and unforgiving.

His veins were shot.

Bruising covered his arms where others had failed to get blood.

It was my turn.

I knew he knew.

I took his hand, cool and clammy and held it in mine.

As I stuck the needle into a thin vein in his hand, he spoke.

“Are you?” He whispered weakly.

“What? Am I what?” I returned...

“Are you going?” He gasped...

“Am I going? Am I going where?” I pleaded. I wanted to help him anyway I could.

“Are you going home for Thanksgiving?” He asked.

My heart sank,

I swallowed hard,

I was bewildered, confused and reminded of our humanity.

“Yes” I told him. “I am going home for Thanksgiving.”

I didn’t know what else to say.

So I didn’t say anything at all.

-Nick Sawyer, Class of 2011

Engulfed, photograph,
Janet Lim, Class of 2009



The Modern World Rushes By...,
digital photograph,
Peter McQueen, Class of 2010



Layers of Life
photograph
Christina UMBER
Class of 2010

Moonlight Path
Acrylic on canvas
Rogelio Sanchez Jr.
Post Baccalaureate Program





War (based on "Afghan Girl")
Watercolor and mixed media
Neera Sodhi
Class of 2010

Raku vase
Ceramic
George Mittendorf
Class of 2010



Teapot, ceramic
George Mittendorf, Class of 2010





The Chase, oil on canvas
Charitha Reddy, Class of 2011

Dogwood, watercolor, gouache, Indian ink
Marina Planoutene, Hem/Onc Researcher





Diaspora, mixed media and acrylic
Sarah Mourra, Class of 2008



Red Blood Cell Models, digital art
Steven Chan, Class of 2011



On War

Edward is a 22 year old young man: short, blond hair, with a beginning of a goatee, rather thin; well, what can you expect after more than two weeks, his mother said, of fasting... He wanted to go to Iraq not to fight, but to preach, and thus, help those poor people find peace. He abhorred war and violence in general, but couldn't think of a quicker way to get there, other than becoming a recruit in the Army. Now, his mental condition got in the way: the recruiter was so impressed by his altruistic tendencies of going overseas to sacrifice himself for the greater good, strictly following God's orders, as they were spoken to him by God himself, that he sent him straight to the psych ER, where I have met him.

He was a quiet young man, somewhat hard to warm up, which was not too surprising considering that after finally working up the nerve to share his most sacred beliefs with a stranger, next thing he knew was to find himself ending in a psychiatric hospital. So much for trust in a world that betrayed his. Paranoia?

When I got to the ER, I found him lying quietly on a stretcher. I sat by him. Not much to be said, I offered, and I stopped there, silent. Then he told me his story, and how disappointed he was that people could think he was crazy. Because I want to help them? he asked. I looked him in the eye. No, I said, because you want to save them.

He got admitted. I saw him on the wards, on and off over the next week or so. Then we crossed paths a few times in my follow-up clinic. He looked good. At peace with himself, maybe a bit too much so, but nothing out of ordinary. One day, he stopped me in the hallway: doctor, he smiled, do you think that if I and people like me, you know, 'crazy', would have gone, things would have turned out as crazy as they are now down there? Honestly, what do you think? Tell me about the right and the wrong doc, about the good and the bad. And the ugly? I asked. No, he said, life is beautiful.

- Dr. Adrian Preda, M.D.,
Dept. of Psychiatry

Deep Green
photograph
Rod Mortazavi
Class of 2010

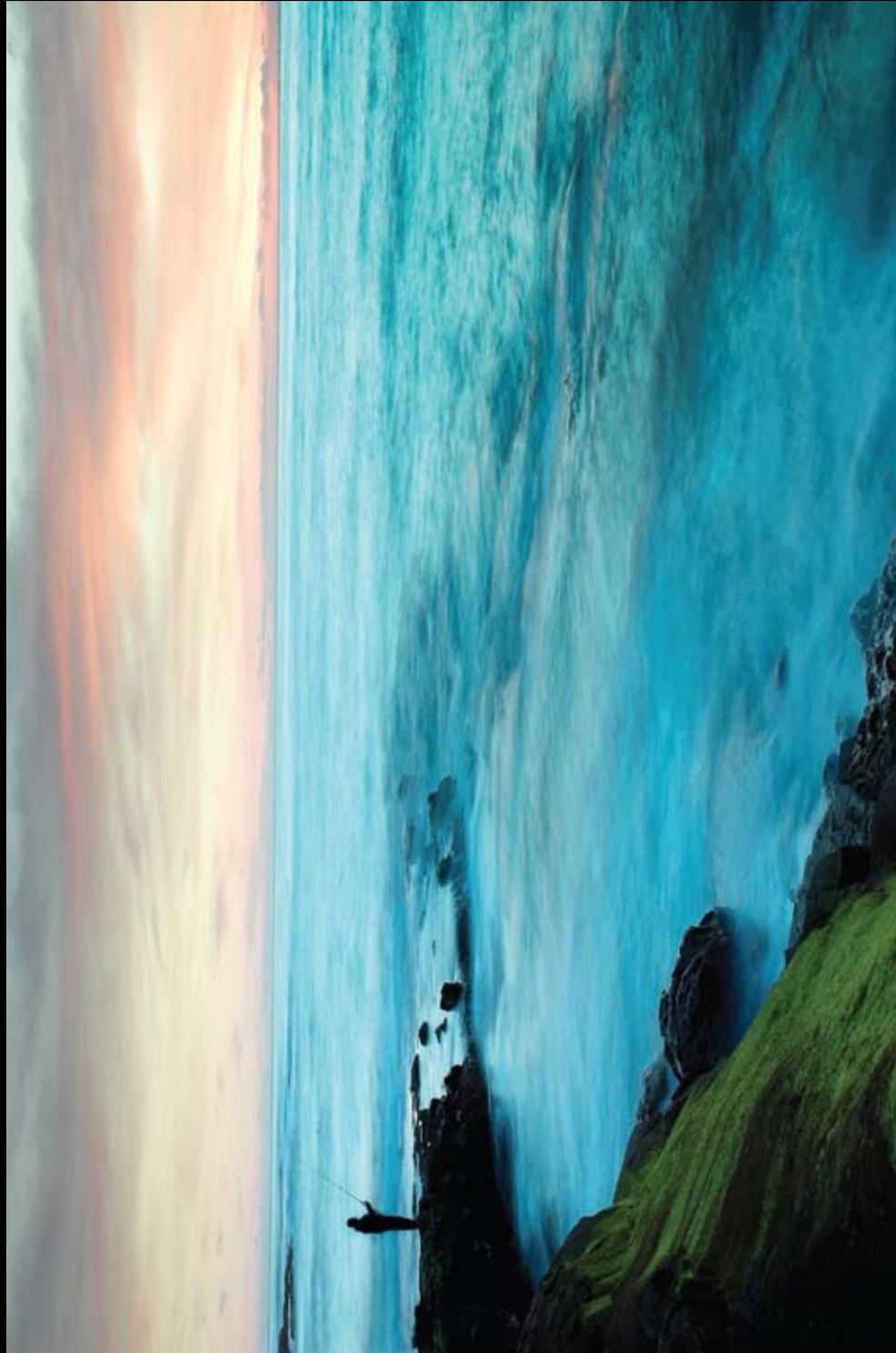


All It Takes
photograph
Rod Mortazavi
Class of 2010



Untitled, photograph
Rod Mortazavi; Class of 2010





Untitled, photo
Denny Le, Class of 2011

Pediatrics



A Father's Gift, photograph,
Erin Minto, Pharmacy Administration

I enter the room
A 5 year old pouts
He pulls at mom's hair
He screams and he shouts

Mom tells me that
Her child is terrible
The five year-old boy
Is almost unbearable

Mom gazes at me
Her eyes full of hope
She pleads with me
"Please, How can I cope?"

Mom wants to know
If there is a cure
That will suddenly make
The child more demure

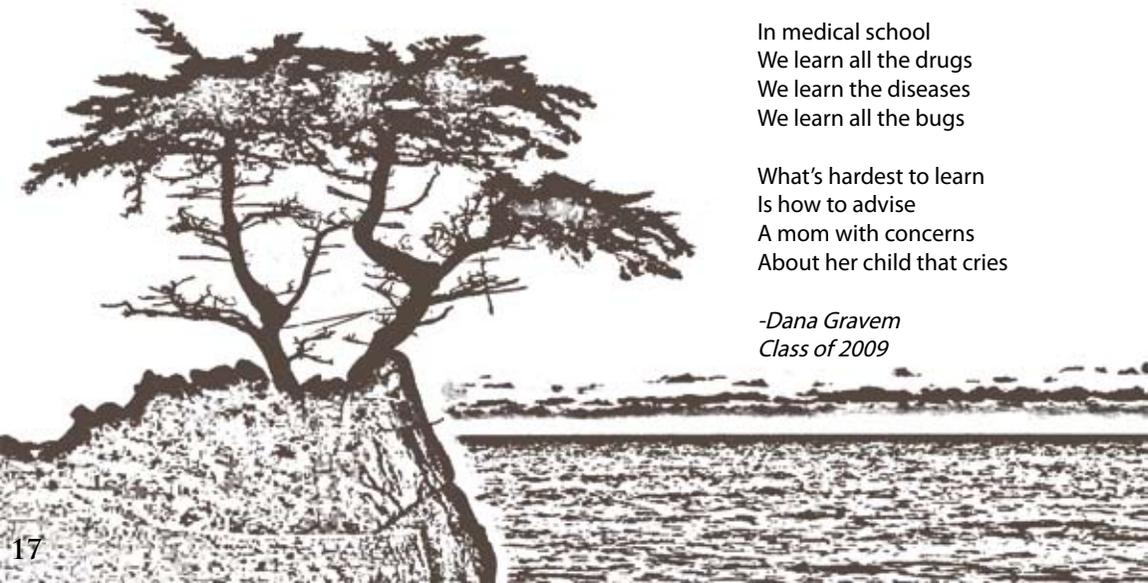
Mom wants some training
On parenting skills
When to use discipline
And when to use pills

At 25 years
I'm hardly the one
To give mom advice
On her wild little son

In medical school
We learn all the drugs
We learn the diseases
We learn all the bugs

What's hardest to learn
Is how to advise
A mom with concerns
About her child that cries

*-Dana Gravem
Class of 2009*





Camelia/Little dancers
Watercolor, gouache, Indian ink
Marina Planoutene, Hem/Onc Researcher



Shadows and Light, photograph
Sherry Reece, Research Oversight

Sunday Mourning

The last day has finally come.
It was inevitable.
I knew exactly what to expect.
The Doctors' prognosis indicated
that today would be the last day.
I did not expect so many people to
show up.
The gifts were not supposed to be
expected, but they really are.
Do I really know all these people?
Some people I haven't seen in
months and now all of a sudden
they have a look of panic on their
faces and are just dying to get
one last glimpse of me before I go
away.
But at this point, if you did not take
the time to get to know me, you
will never really know who I am.
Why are you all crying?
You don't even look sad, yet all of
you get teary eyed when you get
really close to me. I heard two
other people with deep dark bags
under their eyes saying that they
stayed up three nights in a row
just thinking about me.
So strange.
You knew this was going to happen.
How come you never came by to
say hello a month ago when I was
all alone and you had all the time
in the world.
Don't get me wrong, I'm not bitter. I
just feel sorry for medical stu-
dents.

— *Amirpasha Ehsan,*
Class of 2010



The Chase, oil on canvas,
Charitha Reddy, Class of 2011



Mentally Skating Gehry's Folds
photograph, Reuben Paul
Class of 2009



Top of the World, photograph,
Pooya Javidian, Class of 2009

Mt. Shasta & Black Butte,
photograph
Reuben Paul, Class of 2009



Amsterdam, photograph
Shaun Chung, Class of 2010



The Sun-Room
photograph
Sentelle Eubanks
Research Coordinator

Please feel what I feel I am not just numbers

Dear Nurse, Dear Doctor
I can't breathe, I can't breathe

Your numbers are all ok on the monitor
You are just anxious

Please listen to me
Out of breath, I get nauseous

Your numbers are the key
We will give you medicine to calm you down

Save me from this agony
Dear Nurse, Dear Doctor, please don't frown

Your numbers all agree
We will give you medicine to make you drowsy

Several hours pass
My lungs are tighter and more wheezy
I hear a nurse, we have to call a code

She is so swollen inside
Putting the tube in her airway isn't easy
The doctor's voice echoed

Standing at my bedside
They say, no wonder she couldn't breathe
No wonder her respiration slowed

You kept saying my numbers are ideal
But if you could feel what I feel
You could probably better heal

*-Dr. Behnoosh Afghani, MD
Dept. of Pediatrics*



*Honduras-Choluteca, photograph
Daniel Nagasawa; Class of 2011*

Zipper

I found it easy
to

disconnect

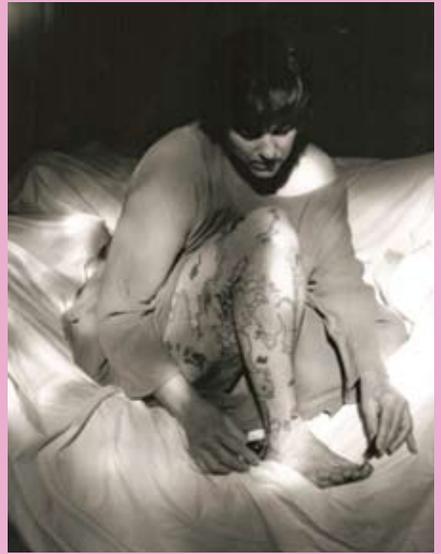
in that darkened lecture hall.
Scrambling to uncap pinkandyellow highlighters
impatient
to catch up
tracing the perfectly dotted lines of the diagrammed
s i l h o u e t t e .

later
it wasn't so simple
gleaming white buttons dividing our bodies into perfect
halves
shoulders stiff against the freshly starched fabric of our
coats
my fingers replaced hers on the scalpel as I continued that
first cut
Point A to C, if I remember correctly
pink highlighter
yellowed skin
Tougher
than I expected

remember that other scar
raised and bumpy
evidence of battles won
he always complains
it itches
as he runs his nails over it
zipper

my gloved fingers tighten on the scalpel
I pull it with purpose
for you, dad
for the reminder that someday
Someday.
no matter the highlighter color
this cut will save a life.

-Neera Sodhi, Class of 2010



Mary Ellen
photograph
Linda Hogsett
Ultrasound Technician



Sunburst through Redwoods; photograph
David Thayer, Class of 2010



Growing Up

Community service, a requirement I'm afraid.
I'd rather play baseball or go out with my friends.
Instead here I am organizing my first project.
It is Saturday morning, a few of my friends are here,
We are cleaning her yard, she is terminally ill.

She is dying of cancer,
What is this disease?
Her yard is a mess,
No flowers to be seen.
The sun is pouring down,
As I begin to wonder,
How it must feel to know death is so near.

We finish her yard in the late afternoon,
She looks into my eyes and I at hers.
She gives me a hug,
With her frail, white body,
While tears come down her eyes as they do for me.
A silence comes, time seems to stop.
I want to help her,
Not clean her yard.
Oh how beautiful and cruel nature can be.

One month later she passed away,
Yet the flowers we planted,
Still grow to this day.

*-Arya Amini
Class of 2011*

Untitled
acrylic on canvas
Irene Lee
Class of 2010

Lido Harbor, Watercolor,
Douglas Skarecky, Dept. of Urology



Pandora's Bowl

It's the only thing you do with conviction
Kneeling over the porcelain bowl, your knuckles white-gripped
Around the edges of the abyss: an emptying of essence.
Tell me what happens when flesh meets flesh,
When that slender finger finds its mark
And opens wide the floodgate

Is it lovely, is it wrenching
to sigh your anguish into oblivion,
To put out your grief with your fingertips?
Or do you feel you have lost a part of yourself
As your hands reach out, instinctively
To reclaim the remains of your half-digested soul?

Too late; you remain
Pandora in reversal, thrusting
The spirits back into the chest the lid slams down,
The sound reverberates as you fumble blindly for the key.
What is it that you lack? What is that itch, that ache
That drives you to the brink of desperation and despair?

I cannot hope to know, and yet,
like those who pepper your footsteps,
Lost in the hollows of your cheeks
And the bitter laughter of your eyes
I am drawn to your embers.

Suffice it to say we are both starving,
Both reaching out in the only way we know how,
The only way we were taught to reach.
We will rescind into the corners of our minds
Until we almost touch - raw and worn, bracing ourselves
Against that onslaught of stomach acid and tears:
Back to back as our earthly forms embrace
And soul to soul as they unwind.

*-Rachel Gross
Volunteer, Clinica Carino*





the Kabbalah passage
photograph,
Victoria Millay
Class of 2009



Contemplation, photograph
Timothy Minh, Class of 2010



Nariz del Diablo Mountain
photograph
Christina Penfield, Class of 2010



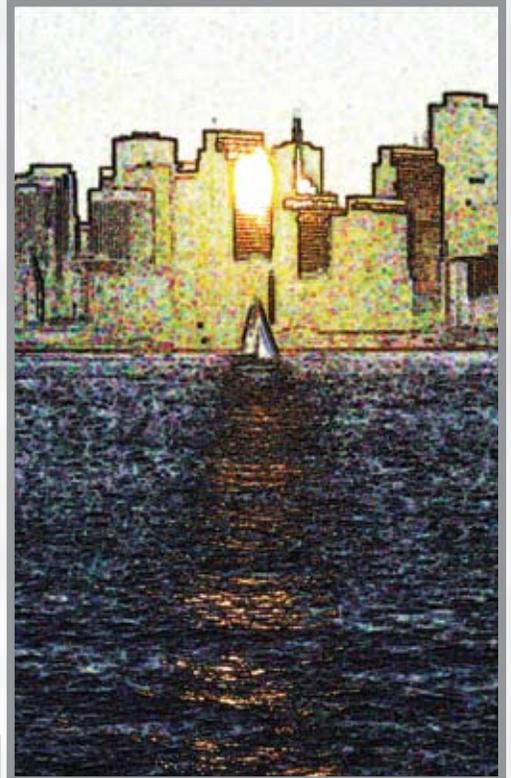
Remembering Atenco 2006 and Tlatelolco
photograph
Tatianne Velo, Class of 2011



On My Own
photograph
Caren Armstrong
MD/PhD program, year 3



Bay Bridge, photograph
Pamela Swan, Class of 2010



Sailing the Solstice, digital art
Kirellos Zmary, Class of 2011



Memories of Quebec
Digital photograph
Marianne Ross
Student Affairs

It's you that I want to come see

It's you that I want to come see

I will wear cherries as earrings
Color my lips with velvet red roses
It's the scent of jasmines that I will wear as my per-
fume
And flames of fire as my garment

It's you that I want to come see

I will come and take you with me
As we become fall
Fill up the streets with a harvest of love
Be the storm, Become the rain
And slowly, become insane

It's you that I want to come see

So I could breathe in your scent
Taste your nectar
Become alive a thousand times with your touch
And feel in harmony with the energy of my soul

It's you that I want to come see

So you could remind me of the woman that I am
So you could show me the beauty and secrets of love
So you could make me feel god
So you could let me trust

It's you that I want to come see

You are the secret of hope
You are the glory of the morning
You are mysterious like the ocean
You are fulfillment of all my sensations

It's you that makes me feel life's vibrations
It's you that has make me forget all my temptations
It's you that lets me be me
It's you that I want to come see



After the boys of summer have gone
photograph
Pamela Swan
Class of 2010

Cactus Closeup
photograph
David Thayer
Class of 2010





Rajastani Girl
photograph
Shilpa Gattu
Class of 2009

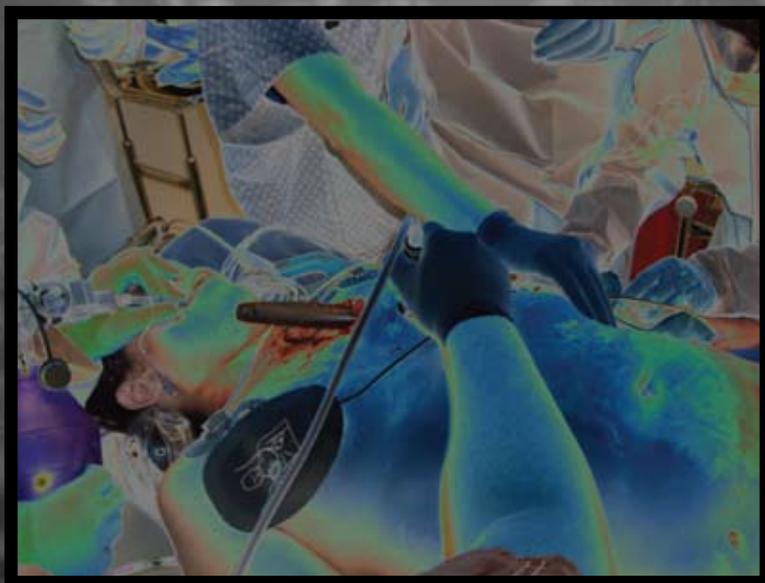
Sunset, acrylic on canvas
Nhu Thuy Can; Class of 2011



Hearst
photograph
Shireena Desai
Class of
2009



Under the knife, photograph
Jenners Foe-Parker, Class of 2010



Solarized Resuscitation, photograph
Dr. Christian Fox, M.D., Dept. of Emergency Medicine

Understand that orthopedists

Understand that orthopedists
are by nature brawny, big, bone-crunching
guys and gals
not known for introspection or sensitivity
Their specialty relies on talent and dexter-
ity, of course,
but also brute force
cracking and sawing
It is not like being a psychiatrist
plummeting the soul of another
Orthopedists may not believe in souls

So I shouldn't have been surprised
When my orthopedic surgeon asked me
bluntly
"What's your prognosis?"
intimating that he did not intend
wasting his handiwork
on a possibly terminal cancer patient
I fudged the numbers
(just a bit)
and he seemed satisfied

In fact, later,
when metastatic disease was put on the
table
by an indiscriminating bone scan
and I weakly vacillated about
whether I really would want to undergo
a total hip replacement
If my cancer had already spread
he looked at me with a twinge of contempt
and stated firmly

"Even if you only had three months to live,
you would still want my hip"
Since he was willing to honor me with
his surgeon's skill
I should not hesitate a moment
I should jump at the chance
to have my last days graced by this implant

The day of my surgery,
the time of the operation unexpectedly
bounced forward
I worried briefly that all my
prayer chains and circles and
blessings for healing
would be sidetracked maybe to the *next*
patient
(*that* would be awful, wouldn't it?)

Then I realized it was
all for the best
my doctor would not want to share the
stage
even with God Almighty
and really, why should he?
Once my future was back in
more fallible hands
there would be real need for prayer

Yet this man was no mere high and
mighty sawbones
When he rounded on me in the hospital
the way he spoke my name made me
think
I'd been accepted (temporarily, of course)
into one of what I imagined to be
his numerous weekend sports leagues

And once, when he had to rouse me
from the blessed refuge of sleep
he shook me, gruffly, yet tenderly
as you might wake a child for Saturday
soccer
(athletic analogies flow when
contemplating orthopedists)

telling me, in the only way he knew how,
that I had to get up
that today would be a better day
that he wanted the best for me
and that, yes, he had done a
pretty damn amazing job using that
unusual anterior incision

-Dr. Johanna Shapiro, PhD
Dept. of Family Medicine



San Giorgio, photograph, Daniel Gromis, Class of 2009



Pedestrian Bridge, photograph, Parker Duncan, MPH, Class of 2008



Purest Tissue, photograph, Stephanie Channal, Class of 2010

untitled, photograph, Samantha Mekhail, Class of 2010





The Golden Waves
photograph
Tanni Thai
Financial Analyst

Lost in the Nature Paradise
photograph
Tanni Thai
Financial Analyst



Reflection

When the sun was still low in the sky without blinking he asked, and
Though she had rehearsed her response she nearly spilled her soda,
Hands meeting under the table.

Finding herself alone she cursed the war,
Gazing eastward each morning,
Confident
He returned but grew distant.

Peering through his glasses she saw the message in his eyes,
Unspoken gestures apologized.
Time heals like cement hardens

Now those eyes are closed amidst the marching of ICU machines
Her hand against his,
The dimmed lights twinkling on the face beneath the pilot's cap in the bedside photo
-Dr. Steven Cramer M.D., Dept. of Neurology

El Torrero, digital photograph
Peter McQueen, Class of 2010





Lillies oil on canvas
Mariam Naqvi, Class of 2009

BLOOD RED SUN

The Santa Anas roared in their ferocity
sweeping down sere valleys,
catching a spark and
lighting the land afire.

The conflagration a sweltering cascade
from trees to homes to men in silver linings,
an alarm to man's incaution
in reading nature's bulletin board.

Brown fog from thick ashes
borne from morning dew,
delivering burning embers to ignite
dry tinder again and again.

A biblical incantation shouting
a summons to Gaia's commands,
a primeval judgment from an ancient jury
a blood red sun rising from the night.

*-Dr. Frank L. Meyskens Jr. MD, FACP
Chao Cancer Center
Associate Vice Chancellor of Health Sciences*



Guatemala-Tikal, photograph
Daniel Nagasawa, Class of 2011

The Passenger

Night submerges empty streets
A swinging streetlight turns from
red
To green
The old car up ahead is stuck,
Stopped
Suspended in time

My horn echoes
The first sound ever spoken here
The car in front still idles
Spectral and forboding

Like a sleepwalker
I leave the warmth of the heater
And the velvet radio voices
Stepping into darkness

Against his shadowed window
A man
Slumps over the wheel
Aged and pale

Fear suddenly becomes
Only a nickname for cowardice
After all,
Underneath
Their smell is the same

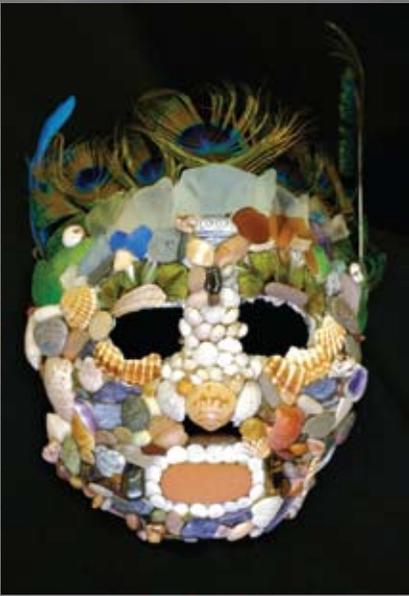
(And when I come back
He will be gone
Like an expression in a language
I never knew how to speak)

*-Sarah Mourra
Class of 2008*



Locked
photograph
Linda Hogsett
Ultrasound technician





Passage into Heaven

Mixed media

Christina Umber, Class of 2010

Missing, photograph

Prof. Stefano Sensi,

Dept of Neurology



Hands

Hands are still when you sit and pray
or when outstretched arms are divebombing away
or when dancing the pogo in a loud mosh pit
or in the minutes that follow an epileptic fit

Throughout the deepest stage of sleep
your hands like plants don't make a peep

Hands move a lot
when you toast your mug
prescribe a drug
give a backslapping hug
or a war rope's tug

flick
or pick
or do a card trick

strum Buck Owens on a guitar's neck
or turn up the volume caused you surfed to Star
Trek

wave for help when you don't want to drown
or beckon at the circus to a toy-wielding clown

finger a crook in a courtroom trial
or, three times, in the air, draw a smile

Hands are still in the coma state
Or after an arrest, when it's far too late
During a blood draw, after "Please hold still!"
Or when blue in a coffin and they're reading your
will

- Prof. Steven Cramer
Dept. of Neurology

Maybe..., acrylic on canvas
Janet Ho, Class of 2010



Transitions

Her hands are still
Quiet, lifeless, cold
And I cannot help but remember
what tender works your hands performed,
when blood pulsed through arteries and tendons heaved and
sighed.
how soft was your touch, whose cheeks you caressed.

Her eyes are distant
Remote, vapor, gone
What sights did you behold,
when light penetrated sclera and retinas responded.
What scenes delighted you, what horrors did you witness?

Her mind is departed
Absent, wanted, needed
What thoughts consumed you,
when nerves crackled signals and brain whirred activity.
What dreams did you conjecture, what kept you up at night?

The days flew by, the days we
freely talked, laughed, chatted.
Together, we mourned life's griefs
and tremendous loss beyond belief.
We marveled life's joys
its humors and its graces.
We stood in the presence of a miracle,
that cold unfeeling parts
were knitted together
and given an incalculable immeasurable gift:
the life of breath.

Our time together ended,
abruptly brief, a blink,
a tiny star in the expanse of the uni-
verse.
Yet timeless,
forever remembered,
forever treasured.

I do not know,
and I come to learn,
that it is not for me to know
the whereabouts of where you have
flown.
But I do have something very impor-
tant to say:
My deepest thanks—
thank you for your gift.
Thank you for guiding
conversing
teaching
and sharing
with me.

And
thanks—
thank you, creator.

*-Alicia Sheen
Class of 2010*



Lake Peten Itza, photograph
Shari Atilano; Ophthalmology Researcher

Have you ever called one?

I've had patients that I was taking care of die before. You come in the next morning and someone says "Hey, did you know Mr. Johnson died last night?" I'd be a little sad, but it never got to me. When people asked me what it was like to work in a hospital and be around death, I thought it wasn't so bad. I said that it's just part of what we do. However, today was different.

I'm currently doing a month in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and a few days ago, a 5 month old girl was brought in who was found not breathing in her crib after having been left alone for 20 minutes. When I was doing the initial history and workup at 4 in the morning that day we knew things did not look good. She had been intubated, was getting air from a mechanical ventilator and the heart had been restarted and was now beating. Everything else was either gone or going. We did all of the usual things we do when we take care of sick kids and managed all of the lab values and respirator settings. At the same time, we got the social worker involved and the family asked about organ donation. After all of the chest xrays, brain EEG's and heart echocardiograms, we still did not have any idea of what had happened. This morning during rounds we were discussing how organ procurement would work tomorrow or the next day. All of the donation papers were signed, but there were still flickers of activity on the brain metabolism studies, so we could not call official "brain death," but we knew it was coming. Sure, she was costing money, but you can't "unplug" someone if there is any quantitative activity, so it was still going to be a few more hours or days.

This afternoon, while we were working on all of our usual duties, I noticed a flurry of activity down the hall and one of the residents came over and said "she's dying." When I got into the room, the attending was there and the monitors began to show flat lines, while the blood pressure started to normalize and not beat up and down. The attending turned to me and asked "Have you ever called one?" I said I hadn't. He then explained to me the official procedure. Listen to each of the four cardiac windows for one minute each with the stethoscope. Listen to the lung fields. Feel for femoral and brachial artery pulses. Check the pupils for reactivity to light. When all of that is done, say the words. So, I did and then I said "Time of death, 3:03." A couple of people holding papers wrote it down and the others started unhooking all of the equipment.

We were already going to have a meeting with the family in a nearby family meeting room, so we gathered these young parents there with a Spanish interpreter, an aunt, a brother, the organ donation lady who speaks Spanish, the attending, the resident I was working with to take care of her and myself. The attending was very empathetic and showed great care when explaining what had happened and how we respected their wishes to not go to heroic measures to resuscitate again. He reiterated that they are obviously loving parents and loved their daughter and that now she was in a better place. The interpreter translated all of this. The parents were shaking and barely keeping from completely breaking down. I couldn't see mom's head as it had been buried in her hands the whole time. Dad's shuddering hand held hers and his other hand lovingly lay on her shoulder. He thanked the doctor and said that he knew we did our best and saw the care and attention we gave her every day and told us that he knew we never gave up or treated her any differently from the other kids with more hope for a future.

Then, the attending asked if they wanted to go and hold her or if any other family member wanted to go in and be with her. With the mother shaking her head, the father lifts his head and speaks in just a strong enough tone that it's obvious he is doing everything in his power just to make words come out of his mouth. "No, we don't want to remember her like this, with all the machines and tubes. Let's remember her laughing and crawling and smiling and playing." It was not a whisper, these weren't words eeked out between sobs. He was a father, and he was bravely standing for something. That was when I lost it. I don't cry too often, but I was bawling. Maybe it was because I speak Spanish and since the interpreter wasn't translating this, that it hit me harder. Everyone who spoke Spanish, the organ donor lady and all the family were all crying now. Like I said, usually I'm pretty stable at the hospital and I can remain cool even when it is a really stressful, sometimes disgusting situation, but this got me right to the core. Maybe it's that I have a little one on the way. Maybe it's that I took care of this girl from the moment she came to the hospital to the final point of calling it. Whatever it was, I now cannot say that I'm a hardened surgeon. And that's a good thing. Innocence can't be recovered, once lost, and no one should be in a hurry to go through that one-way door. I may have "called one," but at least I know I can still call myself "whole."

-Dan M. Hoopes, Class of 2008



Turban Man
Digital Painting
Dr. Stuart Green, MD
Dept of Orthopedics



After Georgia (pts 1 and 2), based on work by Georgia O'Keefe
Acrylic on canvas
Neera Sodhi
Class of 2010

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The Rolling Fog. Peter McQueen, Class of 2010; digital photograph