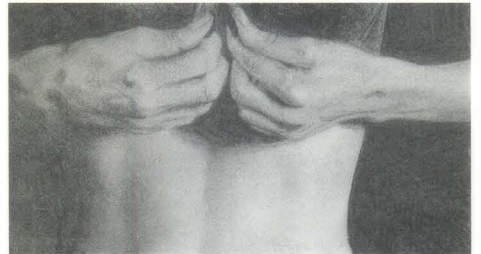
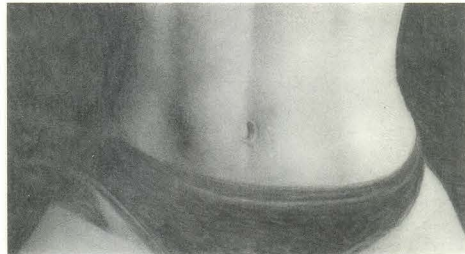


2004-2005

Point Of View



SCULPTURE

POETRY

CERAMICS

COLLAGES

INK DRAWINGS

PHOTOGRAPHY

FASHION DESIGNS

INSTALLATIONS

PERFORMANCES

VIDEO DRAWINGS

PRINTINGS

EXHIBITIONS

LD
6501
.H3
P6
2004-05

Harper College

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Literary Editor	Brian Muldoon
Art Editor	Harlan Douglas
Literary Advisor	Anne Davidovicz
Art Advisor	Paul Andrew E. Smith

Professional Services

Photography	Steve Donisch
Printing	Vis-O-Graphics Printing, Inc.

Student Judges:

Art:

- Harlan Douglas
- Jennifer Nelson
- Jillian Troiani

Literature:

- Karen Brady
 - Nikki Kalinowski
 - Brian Muldoon
 - Russell Schiller
-

Faculty Judges

- Teresa Chung
- Nancy Davis
- M. Glenn Taylor
- Alicia Tomasian

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Well we did it, another installment of *Point of View Magazine* is gracing your eyelids with some of the best that Harper College has to offer, and let me tell you the decisions were grueling. Your judges and I mulled over hundreds of submissions to find and edit 22 pages of exceptional works by future poets and authors. The response was amazing and, on behalf of everyone that aided in the process, please enjoy! A special thanks to the Harper staff for which this magazine would not be possible. I cannot stress enough the gratitude and senses of accomplishment that I think we all feel in putting out this year's edition. Writers and artists, keep doing what you're doing, your work is important. No matter how small you start or how famous and renowned you become, you are stimulating people to think and causing awareness and change with every brushstroke or word. Keep submitting your work and make your voices heard.

BRIAN MULDOON
Literary Editor

Robert Tysl Award and Vivian Stewart Award
Mary C. Loeffler

Art and Design



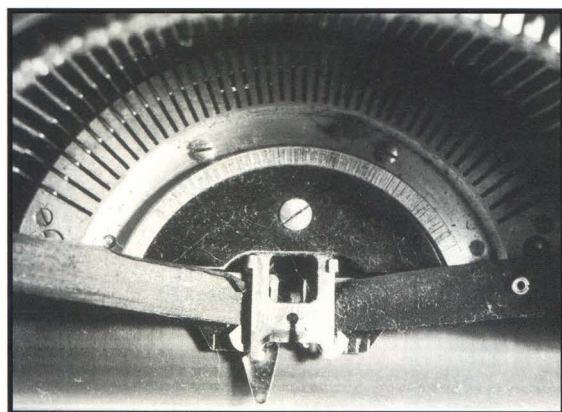
Ray Mills Award: Christine Rhim

The *Point of View* 2004-2005 issue has finally arrived. It has been a learning experience and challenge for me to put together this magazine. As an artist, I am aware of the challenges that lie ahead and hope that this magazine will help pave the road for many who aspire to be professional artists. Out of the 75 entries, it was extremely difficult to narrow it down to those who made this year's issue. I highly encourage those who didn't make it to keep on trying.

HARLAN DOUGLAS
Art and Design Editor

.....
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Jonathan C. Bukiowicz

Title: Various

Media: Color Photography

Dimensions: 4 x 6

W r i d i n g

Christine Hanus

It's like trying to pedal an idle bike in the tenth gear. I take hold of the handlebars and set my right foot on the pedal. My left foot exits the ground as I stand up and transfer all my might to my right foot. This maneuver must succeed in capturing a chain rotation before gravity buckles my balance. The pedal begins to descend to the ground at the rate of stirring cold pea soup. This is when I used to give up a lower, easier gear. But now I continue on with faith in knowing that if I can manage to get that first rotation, the second will be easier. And the third rotation will be easier than the second. Alas, I begin to wheel forward, I p-e-d-a-l again . . . pedal again . . . pedal again . . . now I'm traveling distances greater than any lower gear could get me on a good day.

My college mountain bike sat idle

for years because it suffered a flat tire, and the flat tire provided an excuse not to ride. When I graduated from high school, I didn't plan to attend college. I only applied for admission because my boyfriend applied. After this attempt to fix the flat tire, I found the chain broke. Now the chain is tricky to fix; it must be assembled with precision or the chain will get stuck, and then the bike cannot move. I received a 'D' on my first college essay and the teacher wrote, "You need to go to the writing lab for tutoring." Up until that moment, I had received praise from my teachers for my writing ability and I always received "As" in English classes. It devastated me. "Well, college isn't like high school," people told me so I began to believe I wasn't cut out for college—I left and put the bike in the garage where it began a stint as a wardrobe assistant. You see, when you have a broken chain, it's easier to pedal backwards than to pedal forward.

But then, of course, I couldn't see where I was going in reverse. So years later I took the bike to a cycle shop and I was told the chain could be repaired, but it wouldn't do me good unless I secured new brakes. I met with a counselor and discovered that I placed so low on the math placement test that I would have to take four math classes before I could take a math class that would satisfy the three math credits for a degree. The repairs weren't easy and they weren't cheap, but I was determined to go for a ride.

In preparation for my ride, I researched bike-paths. That's when I discovered that no two bike-paths are alike, and I must bike my own designated path or I won't enjoy the landscape. A chance meeting with a stranger found us talking about the field of journalism. I did some research and found myself intrigued. Now I knew

where I wanted to go so I asked for directions. I was pointed to a path that seemed to ascend a steep mountain. The lore of the mountain baited me with talk of alternative experiences and ideas necessary for maintaining a balanced democracy. I grabbed binoculars to see if I could discern its terrain. I saw rocks and I.F. Stone frantically swinging his arms above his head. He stopped waving to hold up a sign:

To shut off so-called
'subversive' ideas is
to shut off peaceful
progress and to invite
revolution and war.

I promised myself that if there was a way I could afford to go back to college I would. If I can reach the top of the monster—to stake my flag on its face—I will enjoy a view no other bike-path can provide. The next week I was offered a new job and terms of the offer include tuition reimbursement. I coaxed the bike out of the garage with the promise of uncharted territories of exquisite design. Pedal forward three years and I am an honors student and associate editor of the honors newsletter. The first news story I wrote was published, and my literature essay has been nominated for Harper's Anthology—not bad for the kid who needed to go to the writing lab for tutoring. This journey from the mainstream requires endurance because the path is wild and not paved like other paths. It requires faith that I'm on the right path and, most of all, it requires independence because I am trekking it alone.

But I'll leave directions for those who want to follow.



Monica Gonzalez

Title: Marley

Media: Color Photography

Dimensions: 4 x 6



Jonathan C. Bukiewicz

Title: Various

Media: Color Photography

Dimensions: 4 x 6



Harlan B. Douglas
Title: Stage of Maine
Media: Illustration
Dimensions: 11 x 14



Marcin Pawlowski
Untitled
Media: Wood/bronze
Dimensions


Homemade

Matt Branham

Pearly whites, grossly entangled
Eagle's nest, rotten sushi.
Filled and overdosed with initial favor,
I mean flavor, goodness me, my mistake,
Heading south, down south.

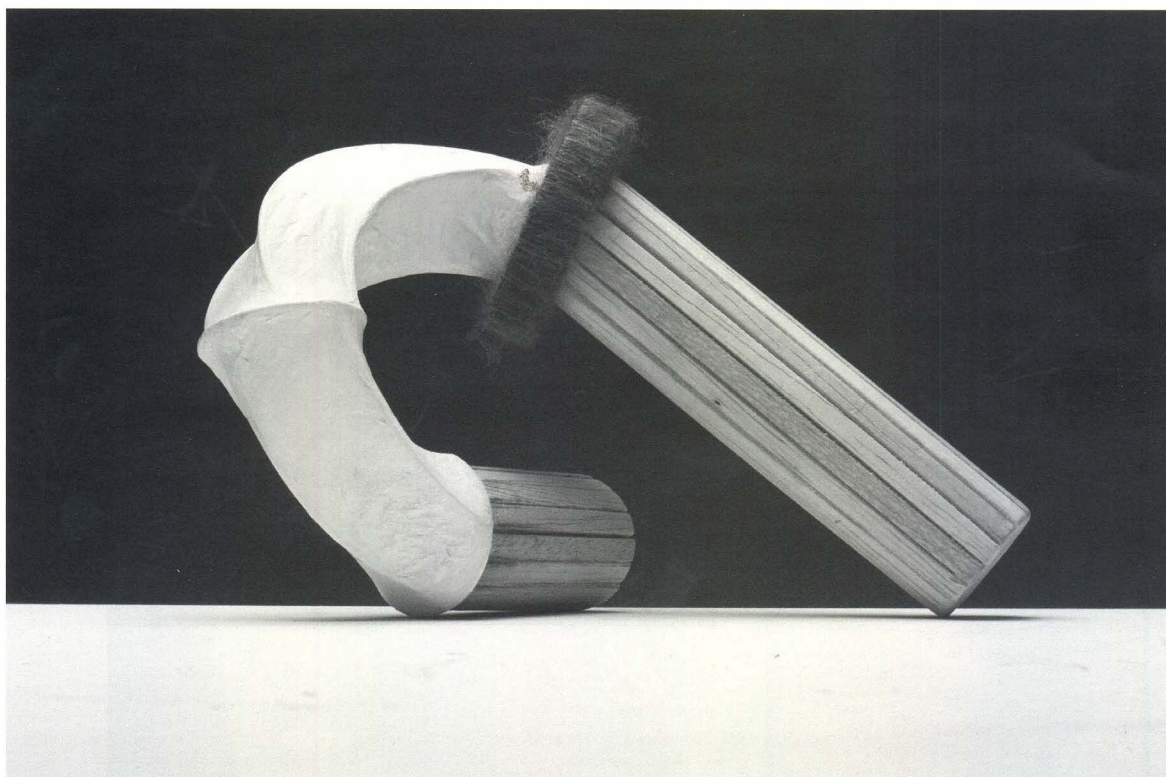
Pearly whites, grandma's soup
Blackberry patch, picking slack.
Empty your pockets for Hillbilly tax,
I mean charity trap, gracious host, read to me,
Stuck in a mine, down in a mine.

Pearly whites, Appalachian green
Stuffed peppers, deer meat.
Burn the blue bridge over three rivers,
I mean shiver when I cross it, forgive me,
Writing a thank you not, sending a thank you note.

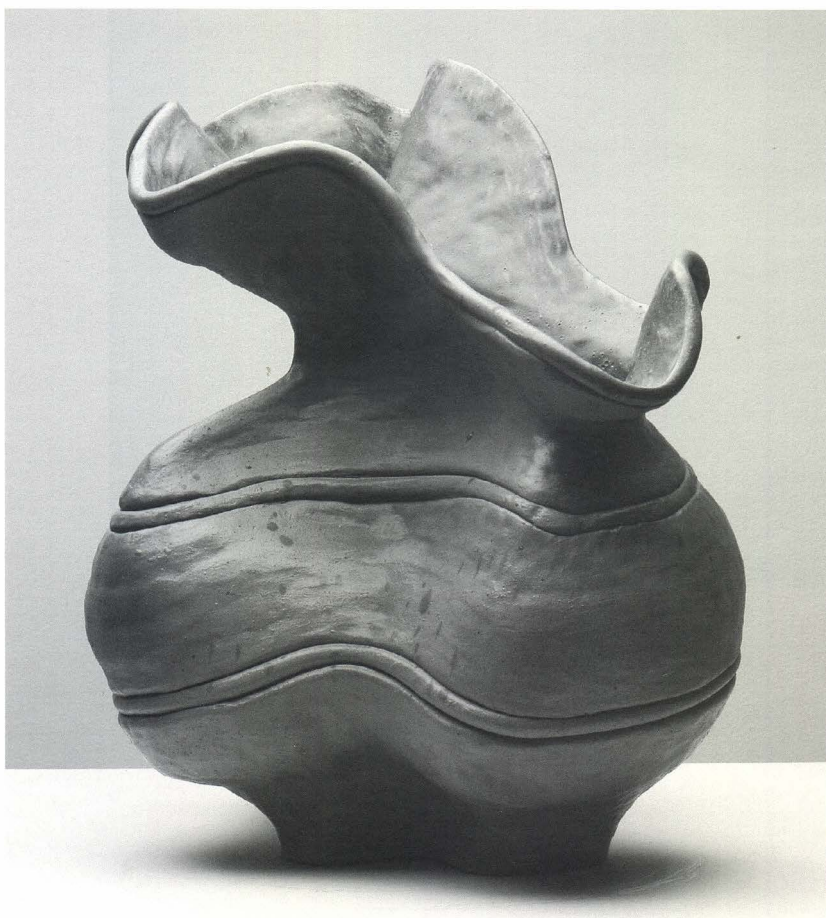


Light
Echoes
Jay Fox

Stare down a
sun-bathed street.
Look out the window
you see what you saw.
Blue silver shape
 that is gone.
Then an old fanner
you see at the tired diner.
Through the blinds he
looks like a napkin drawing.
Have a smoke, and you
blow it at the city.
But you don't
puff it at the Heavens.
Because you know
it will be there,
 Then gone.



Theresa Buck
Title: The Twist
Media: Metal/Wood
Dimensions: 10.5 x 15



Jillian Troiani
Untitled
Media: Ceramic
Dimensions: Unavailable



Talia Nicole Tampson

Untitled

Media: B & W Photography

Dimensions: 7.875 x 9.75

7

The Glorious Meeting of the Eyes

Brian Muldoon

Dust
is high dawn's centered eye
each row sown open
exposing fibrous grains
of wishful want
and never had
sipping ever the nectar
to fall in blonde-haired laps
crushed
like rice paper rose
pressing tight
against the hour hand zodiac
every second a disaster
forever a minute in time
where eyes
meet
glorious
and true intent
revealed.



Bernadette Ray

Title: Fashion Design Drawing

Media: Color Pencil

Dimensions: 10.5 x 15

The Birth Of Venus

Nicole Daniels

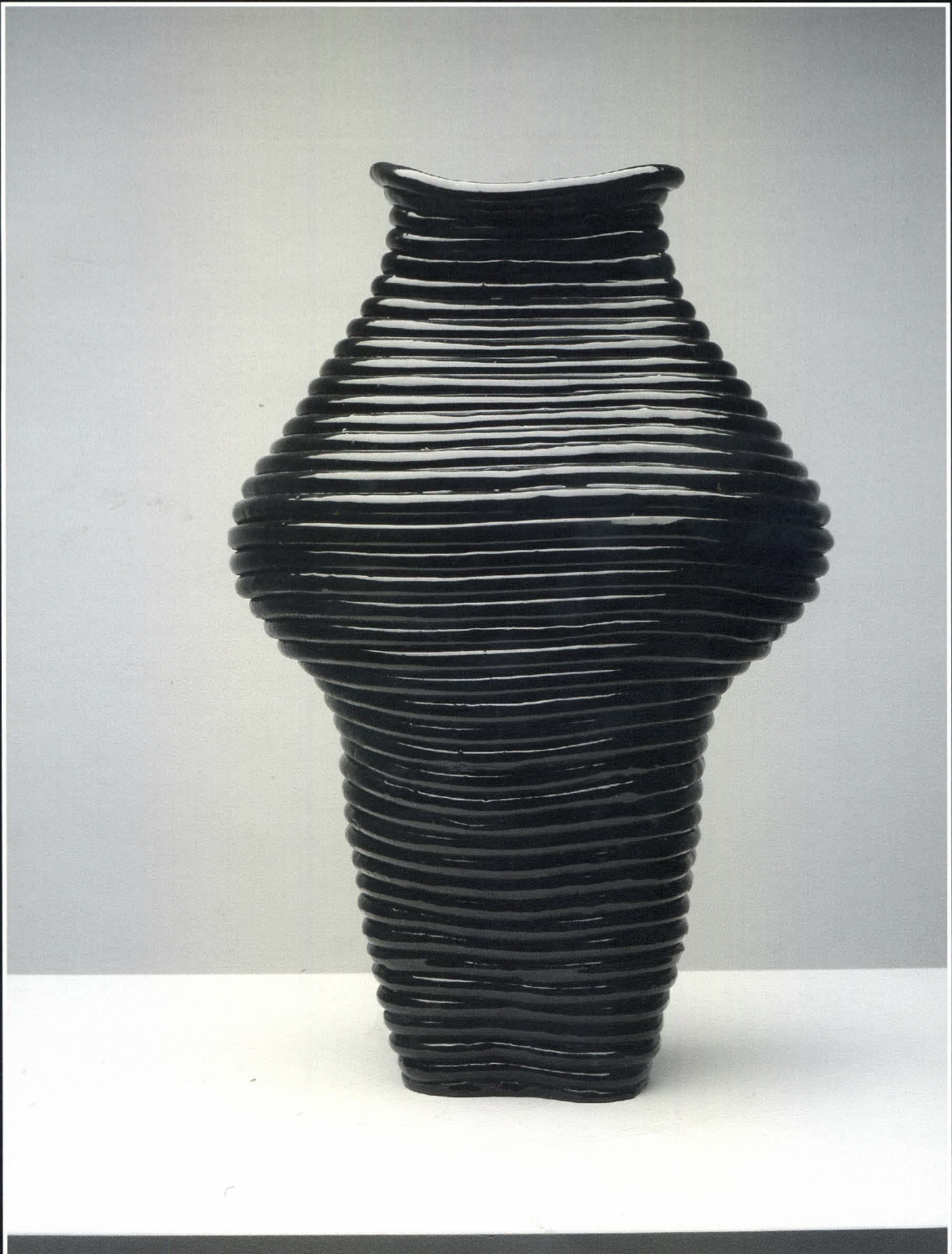
The gilded shell of a scallop washes upon the Cyprus shore
in temperate May, during a shower of blush rose petals.

The shell carries a strawberry locked goddess
a fine heirloom teacup, borne
from the frothy blue-green waves of the sea.

Warm winds blow in from the West,
through pouting lips of entwistled angels.
Demure and child like,
she clothes her right breast with a delicate hand.
The orange grove trees rustle their leaves
in the presence of this heavenly being.

A nymph wearing a garland of myrtle
greet her with a flowing persimmon gown.

And Boticelli takes one giant step back,
the wet paint glistening in the sunlight,
tilts his ear toward his shoulder,
and asks himself
"Why does Venus look just like mama?"

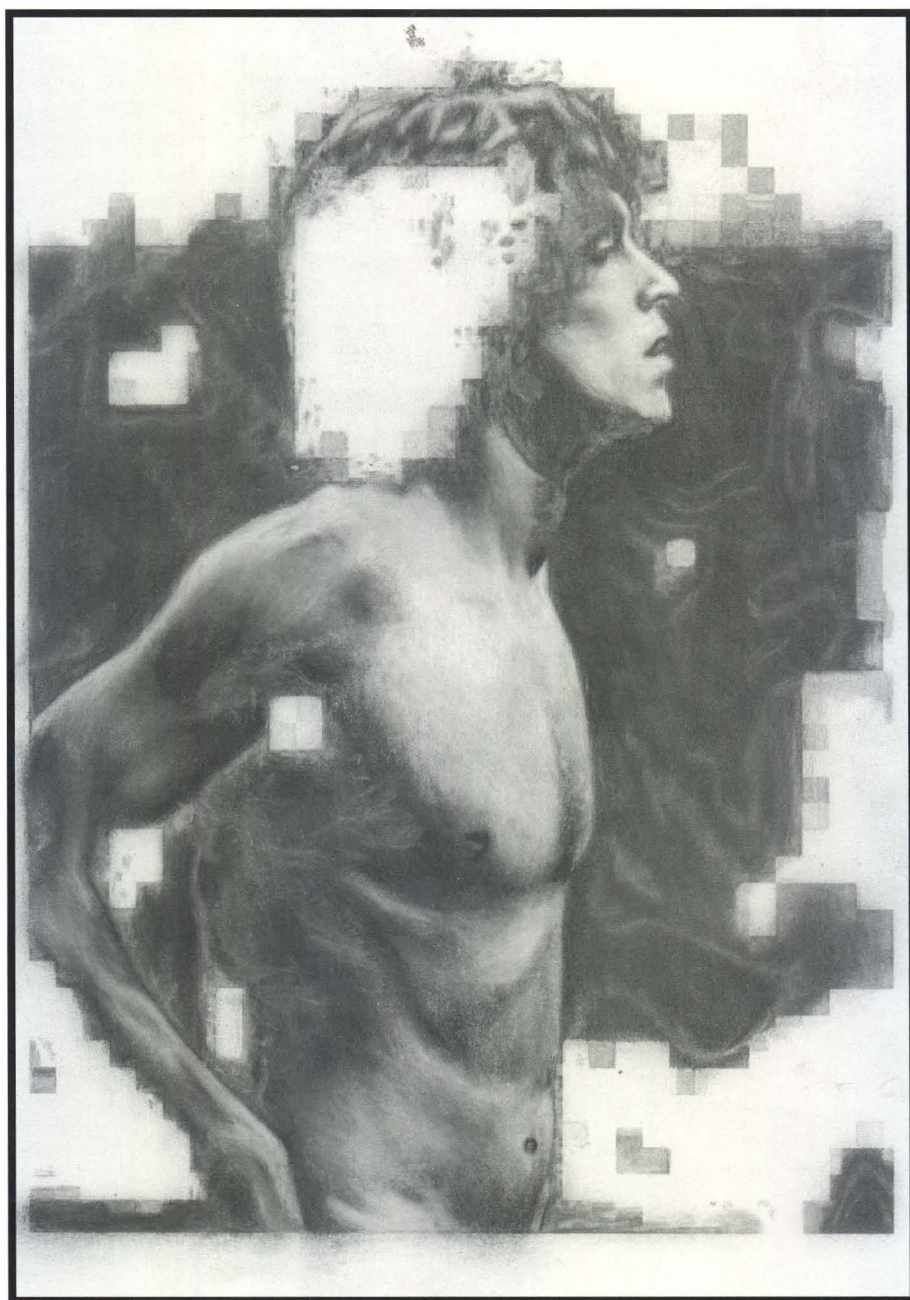


Jennifer Nelson

Untitled

Media: Ceramic

Dimensions: 19 x 13

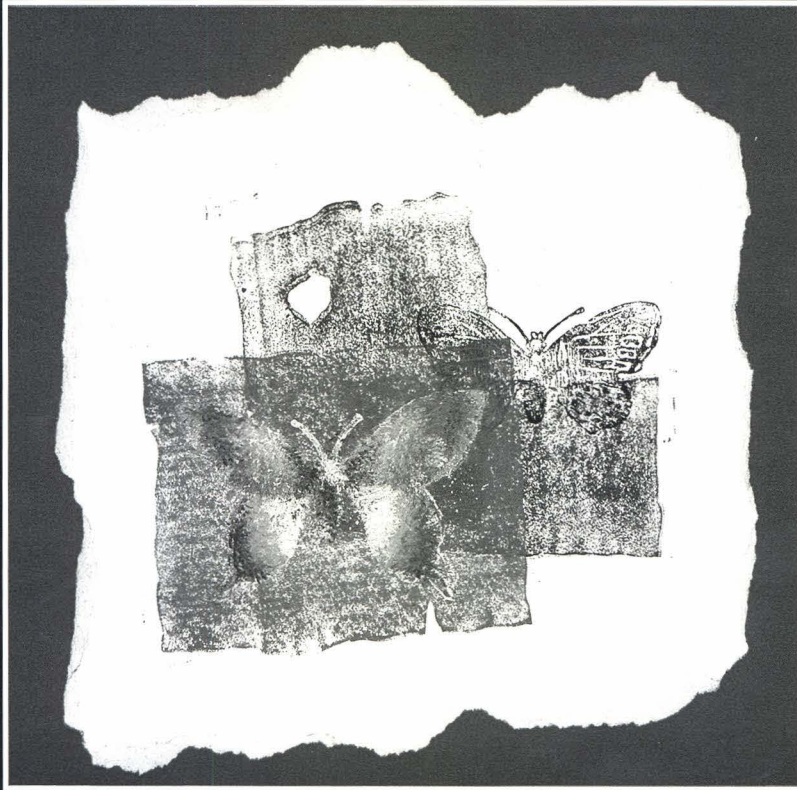


Stevie Yeaman

Title: Brandon Boyd

Media: Pencil

Dimensions: 5.875 x 8.5



Stevie Yeaman
Title: Collage
Media: Mixed
Dimensions: 12 x 12



Meghann Lethson
Title: 3 Calves
Media: Ink and Pencil
Dimensions: 6.5 x 4

Red River 97

Jay Fox

By a town inquiry
letter turn on
the lamplight
a n df i n d
foreign people in
foreign light
war makes children
crawl
women burden
rulers... (hand, giant, writing, biblical) passages.

Buffalo,
banks,
helmet,
shovel and rifle,

A - list to end
a l l Hap pin ess



Mary Charlene Loeffler

Title: The Heart of Me

Media: Ink

Dimensions: 20.5 x 30.5

Blood

Brian Muldoon

Made again in the breath
of the street
honored like some
long lost serenade
to the lords of midsummer
and early evening life
the names I forget
but the faces stick for lifetimes
all closed in around the horizon
in hot lungs of city reason
exhaling tragic loss
finding its beauty in that too
tunneling slow enough
to catch a pulse
on the necks of
cellular statues in the park
sweating out pennies
blown into old coffee cups
by the white cells
on the alveoli
their hands in the heart
full of bread
the business cells
are out later
for plasma and bills
right now it's
a little more pure
like life support
everything is guided along slowly.



Christina Kuentler

Title: Chester, IL.

Media: B & W Photography

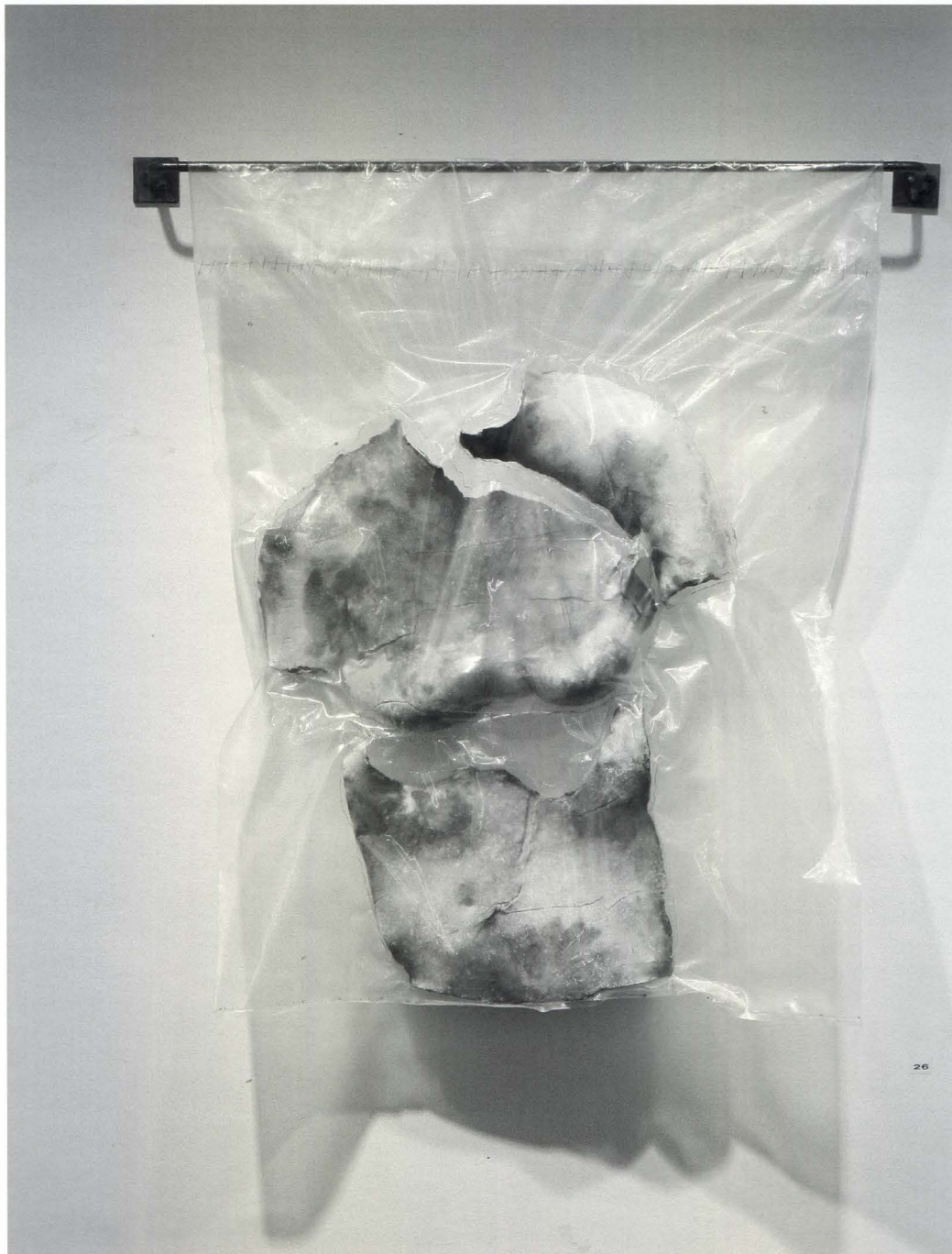
Dimensions: 7.875 X 7.875

Arrogance's Wonder

Yesmeen Noureldin

This poem is dedicated to all the Muslim women who cover out of their love for God and because of it we have to deal with peoples' negative thoughts and actions through their arrogance...

Terrorist, towel head, you can call it what you want
but we have modesty, chastity, and our bodies we do not flaunt
you taunt us with your arrogance; you haunt us with your threats,
but we will always wear it, and we shall take it to our deaths.
You point and you laugh hoping we wear it no longer,
but because we wear it, it makes our faith stronger.
You see us everywhere, but when one of us you meet
you point and you stare, but is it laughter or knowledge you seek?
You say your life is normal because it is laughter you sought,
but you fill ours with grief and you think normality we are not.
You stare, but do you ever ponder...but do you ever wonder?
Why in this world would we ever cover?
You ask, but you do not hear, for it is only Allah [God] we fear,
so do whatever you please, but on that Day where we stand tall and you on your knees,
you'll ask yourself, "Why didn't I wonder...at all?"



Eleanor DeLeon

Untitled

Media: Ceramic

Dimensions: Unavailable

THIN SKIN

By Mark Skiles

By the time you read this, I will most likely have been incarcerated for the better part of my life. I'm a little fuzzy on the details, but as I was to understand the lawyer jargon, I am responsible for the murders of 6 people. Christ, I didn't even pull me trigger. Weak-willed sheep led to the slaughter. Whatever.

"Jury, have you reached a verdict?" the judge inquired while hitting the rest of mat day's dockets.

"We have your. Your Honor," responded the foreman.

"Well, let's have it. This case load isn't getting any lighter."

"We the jury..." *Christ, could she speak any slower.*

She's like a 1st grader reading.

"... find the defendant..."

You should be kissing my ass for the favor I did. I didn't see any of you lined up to endure their never ending, petty whining? Pieces of shit. I should be given the Nobel for work like this. Yeah, you all should definitely be kissing my ass.

"...Paul Trope..."

What did the D. A. mean. "... had I considered seeking help?" "He sits there casting judgment like nothing's at stake. Like it's the difference between a Cristom Williamette Pinot Noir and a Robert Talbolt Sleepy Hollow Chardonnay. He'll never know the responsibility I shouldered. I grew up with an alcoholic, drug addicted father pouncing on me with the fury of the legions of hell for spilling fucking orange juice. No tears

just big toothy grin like the Cheshire cat.

Father Emitte. He betrayed my trust. Did I seek help? Hey, God, you want to field that question? I searched the heavens through Father Emitte's eyes. Pat answers to pre-engineered questions beyond the scope of any human. I guess I feel some remorse for their deaths, but the jury's still out.

"Guilty."

Finally some peace and quiet.

Lamentations 5:5: Our necks are under persecution: we labour, and have no rest.

"It's not my fault. I was made like this. Society is at fault," I'd say as I shuffle towards the squad car. I know what a dog feels like when you rub his nose in his own urine. For a brief moment he feels ashamed but then that gives way to embarrassment but never remorse. Then he pisses again. Maybe out of spite. Same for me.

By now, I would imagine that confusion consumes you. Why wouldn't it? I'm just trying to figure it out myself. Lucky for you, I just earned myself 3 consecutive life sentences with zero chance of parole, so I've got some spare time to sort this out in, what I hope to be, a fairly logical and rational fashion. You're getting in at the ground level with this, so I would ask that you just sit and listen while I try to decipher this mess I call my life.

In short, I am a product of my upbringing. There is no way that I could've turned out any different. Herein lies the difference: I refuse to place blame on anyone but myself. I'm not blaming my dad for the years of him searing my skin with his slobbery cigarettes. I'm not blaming him for the times he punched me so hard that I would spit shards of broken teeth like bloody paper confetti. He's yanked my shoulders out of their sockets countless times, but you don't see me blaming him. For that matter, I won't blame that thing I called a mother, either. She did nothing to defend me, which, in some ways, seems worse than what my dad did but still, I will not shift the blame from anyone but yours truly. I will not cajole you or manipulate you into thinking anything other than the truth: it was me, me, me. Blame me. Nuncaperome. EsmeCulpa. Toda!

I had what some call a seedy past. Things compounded into worst things. One beating led into another. If I bled from my *spiritual cleansing* and stained the carpet or

anything, consider it round 2 with the same outcome. Burned dinner? Bruised kidney. You get the point.

I always memorized scripture but more for appearance than for an actual desire to better my life. That's what you did in our house. That's what all God-fearing men did. Towards my latter Bible school years, I had memorized quite a bit.

"If life is the stage, then God's word is the script from which all actors should study," my dad would say with absolute conviction. Of course then he'd pop 4 Vicoden and chase it with 3 shots of Grand Marnier, but what's not normal about that? That's when the monster awoke and danced to the rhythm of the war drums. Or, in this case, painkillers and sweet liquor.

I learned how to remove unbelievably pesky stains and clean to perfection. You don't believe me? Try me. You can polish chrome with club soda. Clean the oven? Bake a pan of ammonia. Sharper pant creases? Turn the trousers inside out and rub a bar of soap on the inside crease; turn right side out and iron as usual. Tear stains on pillow cases? Five aspirins dissolved in water and rub. Lipstick on the collar? Rub with a little white vinegar. Busted tooth? Place it in milk and treat the empty socket with zinc oxide and oil of cloves. I could do this all day, I learned how to fix small appliances. I learned to serve. I believe that my life has been spent and will continue to be spent serving others. Even the death of those miserable bastards served someone. Like I said, I did society a favor whether they want to admit it or not. There had to be more than 6. The way I see it, I got off easy.

It's not easy to get to the emotional and mental threshold at which I've arrived. The 3 consecutive life sentences sans parole was me finding out exactly what my threshold was. It wasn't on purpose. I mean my life goal wasn't to see how much stress I could endure. That's just how it happened—I left the house at 22 and went to school for paramedicine. More stress. Nothing like being beaten for the better part of 2 decades, forced to memorize scripture for the complete family make-over, and learning obscure tidbits of knowledge about fine materials, stain removal, and culinary art. I can add to my vast resume of uselessness learning to save people in dire situations where death is potentially imminent.

Matthew 24:13: "But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved."

After I graduated from school, I was hired by a private ambulance company in metropolitan Fresno, California. If you were to consider California to be the armpit of the United States, then Fresno is the anus of California. They are the raisin capital of the world. Self-proclaimed and yet I don't doubt them. I worked the metro area of Fresno. Cess pool. Dingy, blood-red, low rise buildings lining the streets like architectural corpses. Concrete cracked, with chunks of dead cement littering the gutters. The chunks of concrete competed with fast food wrappers, empty cigarette boxes, and your occasional condom among other nondescript rubbish. Pregnant 20-something-year olds aimlessly walking the streets with their horny boyfriends strutting proudly that they knocked up another girl. God forbid they face responsibility. Ancestors come here to try and make a new beginning and now they live 8, shoulder to shoulder, in 750 square feet of sweat box. Meanwhile, the grandson just keeps tallying up more pregnancies like they're UPC codes redeemable for cheap plastic toys—most likely made by the grandfather in some industrial, corporate sweat house for \$3.25 per hour. So much for the young taking care of the elderly.

You're at a post which could be at the ambulance base or a hotel room that the company pays for. Company policy is anywhere in the city in under 9 minutes. 9 minutes is insane. From the time the tone hits my radio and I respond, I better be there in 9 minutes. I guess the comforting fact is that it's the same for everyone. Jesus, they have us spread so thin in every way you can imagine.

I just manage to fall asleep after the last call and there it is again. Pretend to sleep. Pretend to wake up. Pretend to give a shit. If I could, I'd just ignore it the way everyone ignores us when our lights illuminate the sky and our sirens howl through the air as loud as the patient screaming. This is the real deal. No guys sitting in a firehouse back-slapping and ass-patting about the last call. I won't say anything regarding the financial difference between us and them. A step up from circus monkeys doing tricks all for at least \$40,000 and one hell of a pension upon retiring. No chance in the world changing that after 9/11. I don't want it changed, I just want the same. I mean, Christ,

other than fight fires, to do the same job with 100% more competence. How do I know? Nurses and doctors don't lie. You should see the reports the fire fighters give the nurses. I wouldn't ask those idiots to write a grocery list let alone procedures done to a patient. Stick to putting out fires and leave the lifesaving to someone with half a fucking brain.

So anyway where was I? Oh yeah. The tone hits and me and my partner Tony are off lickety-split.

"Unit 416?"

"Dispatch, Unit 416. Go ahead."

I say as f'm almost in the rig. Tony drives.

Paramedics don't drive. EMTs drive. They're the little brother.

"Unit 416, priority 2 traffic, at Jensen and 1st Street."

"Dispatch, Unit 416 copies."

Lights and sirens and blazing down the asphalt. Tony's Map Quest. That is his job. The impressive part is that he never flinches. It's like the ambulance is a white blood cell surging through the artery of traffic. The other drivers on the road are the cholesterol clogging up the passengerial artery fucking up my time. I need those seconds to get to someone who's dying. You need them to get to the mall to pick up your 14-year-old. May it rest on your head.

So that's all the specifics. That's the only information you're given until you get underway to the scene. Thirty seconds later—which seems like eternity—dispatch calls back.

"Unit 416, Dispatch."

"Dispatch, Unit 416. Go ahead."

"Unit 416, MCI at intersection of Jensen and 1st Street. Vehicle versus pedestrians. Scenes secure. How do you copy?"

"Dispatch, Unit 416 copies."

MCI stands for mass casualty incident. Basically, a car played bumper pool with a couple of pedestrians running across an expressway like quail. The bad news is that that street is signed at 55 M.P.H. No one does 55. It's at least 65 and usually more.

Me and Tony roll on the scene and I call into dispatch so they can stop our time. I mean, no joke, it's like those guys who play speed chess. Dispatch calls us and punches the clock for us to begin. We get on the scene and then we

have to punch the clock.

“Dispatch, Unit 416 is on scene.”

“Unit 416, Dispatch. Copy all. Dispatch out.”

Tony and I get out and make our way to the rear of the rig to grab our gear. Walk. Never run. Never, ever run. If you run, people start panicking like they have something to worry about. You need to take charge of the scene. Besides, when you run you do stupid shit like not observe the scene for possible danger. Sure dispatch said that the scene was secure, but what do they know? They're lounging around in some computer-infested office hedging their bets on who gets the most radio traffic or worst incident. Disengage, baby, disengage. If you don't, you will surely lose your mind.

“Tony, grab the airway kit, would you?”

I grab my black, nylon medical bag complete with I.V.s, a blood pressure cuff, stethoscope, and some basic first aid materials. I see the first victim and assess that he's ours. He's lying on his back some 40 feet away from the vehicle that hit him. I'll bet he looked like a gymnast flying through the air, somersaulting and twisting minus the grace and elegance. He looks like a pile of raw meat. He is lying on his back but his hips look shifted in a direction that doesn't look natural. His right thigh is flat on the ground, yet his knee is bent up like he's going to do a sit-up. His hair is pushed back from his forehead to the back of his head like carpet that's been pushed back and bunched up. He has a laceration that goes down to the bone extending from his lower lip to the bottom of his chin.

“Sir? Sir? Can you tell me where you are?”

“I hurt,” he mumbles back to me in Spanish, as he clears his throat from the blood streaming down it.

“Sir? Can you tell me your name?”

He's unconscious. Nothing but some wheezing as he exhales and labored inhaling. I make a fist and dig my knuckles into his sternum to see if I can rattle him out of unconsciousness. I know that sounds cruel, but if you want cruel, use ammonia inhalants. That's cruel. Shit, that's abusive. I check his pulse and watch his breathing. He's at 6 breaths a minute and his pulse is ballistic. Congratulations! He just earned himself an endotracheal tube. Essentially, I am going to force feed 8 inches of 3/4" curved, surgical steel. If the sternal rub didn't snap him out of his catatonic

state, this would.

We slide a spine board under him for transporting and secure his head for precaution. We move him into the rig and Tony drives us to Valley Medical Center just 5 minutes away. I put my head set on and contact VMC to alert them that we are 5 minutes from their base and we are heading in priority 2 traffic: lights and sirens, unassisted.

I puncture his flesh in both arms with 14-gauge needles. I hook him up to lactated ringers. Gatorade for the veins. I hook him up to the monitor. He has severely low blood pressure and his pulse is spiked at 210 beats per minute. I call up Valley Medical Center so they can know what I know and prepare as best as they can. This guy's going to need all the help he can get.

In school, they teach you about the Glasgow Coma Scale and Trauma Score. This universalizes EMS and hospital terminology so that they can both be on the same page without born services being afforded me opportunity to be looking at the same thing. Basically, the GCS lets you know, on a scale of 1-10, how conscious the patient is. The Trauma Score, T.S., is based on a 1-15 sliding scale letting the hospital know exactly how bad the situation is.

“VMC, this is Unit 416 with stat trauma, how do you copy?”

“416, send your traffic.”

“Roger, VMC, 416 currently en route with 35-year-old male. GCS 3. TS 8 ...”

“Say again your last, 416, What's that out of?”

Dumbshit! Get off the fucking radio. I swear, intern doctors are worthless.

“Be advised, VMC, GCS is 3 out of 10 and TS is 8 out of 15”

Nurses don't get paid enough. They run the show and have to wean these snot-nosed doctors from the books into reality.

“VMC copies, 416, continue your transmission.”

“Thank you, VMC. Patient has incurred a sucking chest wound, multiple rib fractures, and probable pelvic fracture. Lower extremities are completely unstable. There are no distal pedal pulses. Patient is carpet-piled and has full thickness lacerations from the lip to the chin. How do you copy?”

“VMC copies all.”

“Roger, VMC. Unit 416 has started bilateral I.V.s

and is monitoring heart. Patient appears to be hypotensive and tachycardic. How do you copy, VMC?"

"VMC copies."

"See you in 2 minutes, VMC. Unit 416, out."

Tony went outside to clean out the back of the rig. It was like something out of Fangora. I mean there wasn't 2 inches of blood, but there was enough that it would ebb and flow with the dancing of the ambulance as it careened around corners. Whatever wasn't on the floor was sloshing around on or in the 35-year-old male. With the injuries that guy had, I wouldn't be surprised one bit if he lost 2 liters of blood in 5 minutes. The only thing keeping the stagnant blood, bone shrapnel, and torn pieces of vein and artery in his body was the skin that was now stretched and bloated. He died.

When you lose a patient, laughter is the best medicine. There isn't any one of us at the base who wouldn't have; it's how you cope. The crux: I failed. I have done nothing but fail in this life. No one could not fail in this hole. And the worst part is that I continue to pursue this lifestyle of servitude like a rabbit continually going deeper and deeper into his hole. There's only so much a person can endure, and I believe the culminating point was seeing this day in and day out, replaying old tapes in my mind about shit I went through and that pretty much did it. I gave up one more patient before I turned in my opulent lifestyle of blood, death, and my disdain for firemen. The last guy I treated, "Peter Panned" off the top of the Bank of America on McKinley and Route 41. He experienced 3 seconds of freedom before he smacked the ground. He didn't die, however. People like this piece of shit pissed me off. If you're gonna do it, have some fucking resolve. 5 sleeping pills. 3-story fall. Slicing the skin horizontally. Bullshit! A job worth doing is a job worth doing well. There's a reason the term is *commit* suicide. It was at that moment that I decided to get out of the game. With that amount of cynicism and callousness, I thought it best to consider alternative careers.

I handed in my resignation, and the department was surprised at the length of time I lasted.

"We had a pool going to see who'd snap first," giggled the watch supervisor.

Then the secretary said, "Yeah, Paul. You just cost

me \$200. I had you tappin' out 5 years ago."

It was like popcorn popping after that. Everyone was chiming in now.

"You lasted 11 years, 2 marriages, and minus 30 pounds. ..."

"You've probably forgotten more than I'll ever know, Grandpa..."

You know, shit like that. There were always betting pools to see who'd leave first. Another coping mechanism. Hell, if you won, just think of the money you'd get. Maybe it would pay for counseling if you were smart enough to use it for that. Yet another hopelessly bleak profession. Please, sign me up to listen to people bitch and moan, being completely devoid of any ability to cognitively process through their petty bullshit. Fleshy, emotional punching bags.

I needed something that was brainless and without an iota of responsibility, so I decided to apply at Lucky's grocery store bagging groceries for minimum wage. It was for \$2 an hour less than what I made as a paramedic, so it's not like it was a huge pay cut. The worst I had to endure at this job was putting away things people couldn't pay for or people complaining because I chose paper when they wanted plastic. Even the lady that snapped at me for not double-bagging her pot roast simmered down when I gave her some helpful hints on preparing it. Finally, my accumulation of knowledge for all things useless was paying off. Someone would inevitably come in and buy meat they didn't know how to cook and I could help them. I did help them. Other people would buy baskets of cleaning supplies and I'd tell them a better way of cleaning something. I was becoming optimistic at this point. Had I found my niche in life? Who knows, but it felt good. I was happy. I was productive and I worked hard. It was, for once, black and white.

Pretty soon I had developed a sort of cult following. It was like a game for these idiots.

"Hey, Debbie, did you see Paul today bagging groceries?"

"Yeah, Erin, I did. And he said that I should only turn the meat once after 5 minutes on a medium high to high flame and he was right."

"I know, isn't he great? Why just last week he told

me how to cook a lobster and eat it properly. I still looked like a barbarian, but he told me it takes lots of practice and that everyone looks like that to begin with.”

My life had come to this. I was ecstatic. A dog doing tricks. After about 6 months of working there, people started saying tilings like, “Paul I could have used your advice last night because of *blah, blah, blah.*” Or, “Remember how you said to remove broken glass from the shag carpet last week, Paul? How do you *blah, blah, blah?*”

I decided to take my knowledge to a different realm of existence. I started giving out my phone number to help assist people. One thing led to another, and it was like having a second job. Considering I didn’t charge for this, this job yielded even fewer financial dividends than paramedicine or the grocery store. The payoff was different, though. At first. It started with the usual malaise of the ordinary. I answered your typical questions regarding food preparation and quantity, stain removal, and odor concealment, but eventually people started pouring out their souls. It caught me off guard but then it became second nature. Sort of the way death did when I was a paramedic.

There was a quiet solace and anonymity in hearing a person over me phone describe their problems to you. As the problems became bigger and bigger, the caller identifying him or herself dwindled but they’d still do it from time to time.

As a joke, I made bumper stickers advertising a sort of crisis hotline. They simply said, “Call. I’ll listen. 1-888-blah, blah, blah, blah.” Of course I was influxed with prank calls at first, but then I would get your occasional somewhat serious call.

“Hello?” I would say while breading some chicken breast. It’s hard to talk while you have raw egg all over your hands.

“Yeah, hi. Listen, I got this problem. I...”

That’s where I always tuned out. I have from the beginning even at the grocery store. “Go ahead. I’m listening to you.” I’d look up at the hamster clanging around on the squeaky treadmill.

“... Things are so tough and some times I just want to give up,” the voice says. In my head, I just wish they’d do it and quit bothering me.

Yeah, so I advertised telling people that I’d help, but

the emphasis was on home economics not sniffing and groveling about infidelity, lack of tune, high golf scores, and sexual inadequacies. Finally it happened.

“Go ahead and do it. *That* will solve everything,” it slipped as I dropped some valium into the water bottle of me hamster’s cage. I never meant for it to. It just sort of happened. The same thing happened with the next caller. And the next. The more serious the problem, the more adamant I became in my suggestion.

The first time I saw someone’s name in the obituaries and recognized it, I was mortified. Mortification gave slowly away to panic which gave way to a feeling of control and empowerment which ultimately gave way. What can I say? I was finally good at something! Granted, not everyone took me up on my suggestion, but when they did and I knew about it... fireworks. And then I’d give the hamster another valium in celebration.

Psalm 101:2: “I-will behave my self wisely in a perfect-way. ... I will walk-within my house-with a perfect heart.”

After this stark realization, the only place left to try out was back at square one: enter St. Anthony’s Cathedral on the upper south side of Fresno. It was surreal. It smelled of old, wet hardwood and a hint of urine. It was in the heart of the slums so that wasn’t surprising. Looking down the center aisle, on either side of the altar, were huge depictions of scenes from the Bible in stained glass. Front and center was J.C. himself on the cross. It always amazed me the different ways art has depicted Jesus. This particular rendition seemed to transcend gender. He was gaunt yet beautiful. He had big wet eyes like a newborn, full of shine. He was emaciated yet had sort of bad muscles like a comic book hero. The ultimate social activist.

Everyone finds religion and once they do, everyone backslides. That’s the cycle, isn’t it? Find, backslide, repent, and find again. Continue that for a lifetime. Now it’s been a long time since I’ve been spiritually active, so I had some accounting to do. I didn’t want to bother God with meager deposits so I decided I should wait awhile and bring Him a real doozie of a deposit. You know, sort of round out the resume. I had some emotional vomit that was rapidly approaching my spiritual epiglottis and the taste was going to be in and then out of my mouth

and onto whomever it was allocated to dispense with his spiritual duties for that night. Tonight's lucky recipient was Father Hollis.

I made my way to the closets of iniquity. I opened and shut the door and conviction and judgment apparently had followed me in. Remember that vomit? Well, it was long over due. I sat down and I heard the swoosh of the partition.

"I've played a lot of spiritual games, but for the life of me, I don't know what to do here. Padre."

This should be good for a laugh.

"Well, we just talk, my son," he said in his best low, calming voice.

"Talk, huh? What are the rules? What goes around here?"

Here it comes. I can feel me unloading. I hate you. I hate what you stand for. I'm sorry. So very sorry.

"I'm sorry; I'm not following you..."

"What I mean. Your Holiness, is what am I allowed to say and how honest am I supposed to be?"

"As honest as you can be," he responded.

I could hear him settling in on his side of the sin closet, so I figured that was my cue. Nothing brings two people closer together than inappropriate self-disclosure and one-sided vulnerability. It was like he pulled the one string that would eventually unravel my emotional sweater leaving me cold and naked. But not powerless. Never powerless. He'd never take that away. No one would.

"Ok, Padre. Where's God been the last 38 years?"

"God is everywhere. God is everywhere, all the time."

"Interesting, because I've done everything I thought He wanted. I danced the dance, you know? I talked the talk. You have to know what I'm talking about Father. Christ, you must go through way more shit than me, Padre, right?"

By now, I'm pretty pissed off but there's nothing he could do about it. My whispering gave way to a sort of snarling, guttural rasp.

"My son, perhaps we should go to my office and talk," he said as he shifts again.

I slam my hand against the inside of the thin-paneled cubicle.

"And why's that? Am I too dirty for you, Father? Are you afraid my shit's gonna splatter all over your holy garments and stink you up to where God can't tell the difference between a self-righteous ass and a broken shell of a man completely fucked?"

He tried to calm me down, but to no avail.

"Son, really..."

"No- I even tried to get you to tell me what was fair in this conversation and you said honesty. Well this is honesty at its finest. Nowhere to hide now, Father. Just you, me and God, and we're gonna hash this out if it takes all fucking night."

I didn't want him to talk too much. That would've ruined the experience. Finally someone was going to listen to me. I was going to be allowed to vent. I was finally going to be known blemished and broken.

"There must be some level to which you can come down out of your spiritual tower and relate to me. You know, meet me where I'm at. Perhaps you have been one of those sick priests hurting children. Naughty, naughty. Well, I've been the victim of a lot of pain in my life by my father, so maybe there's an angle there," I said.

"My patience is only so tolerant. Anything else like that, and I'm going to have to ask you to leave. Are we clear?"

I do believe I've touched a nerve.

"Crystal, Padre. How about this? We are, or have been, in the same business. You try to save people's spiritual lives, and I used to try to save people's physical lives."

"Try as we might, the True Healer, is God. We can take no credit for anything other than what God has gifted us to do. In your case, you treated the sick and injured."

By now, he had gotten the point that what I was saying and asking was sheer rhetoric. He never responded again.

"I love the way you church it up. Father," I chortled.

"Try this on: I treated the crackheads that would immediately be back on the streets shooting bad dope that earned them another ambulance ride where I would clean up their shit and vomit and blood except it wasn't just twice. It was twice a month for 2 years. Or how about

being called on scene where if I would've shown up 2 minutes earlier, I could have gotten the patient to the hospital where they could've bled out there instead in front of me? How about the guy that screws the system because he knows what the local hospital is serving for dinner that evening and makes a 9-1-1 call feigning shortness of breath and pain on his left side which, undeniably, would earn him a priority two limousine ride to the hospital where there was no waiting line for dinner? Sick and injured. You got off easy, Father. You and your tradition. Maybe you come up with pithy little prayers, pining on about bullshit. You've got your pat answers, right? I talk to you, you tell me what to say to God, and I get what I want or deserve. That's all a prayer is, isn't it? It's how the squeaky wheel gets greased. The Prayer for Less Sin. The Prayer for Less Income Taxes. The Prayer for a Corner Office. The Prayer Preventing Excessive Hand Sweat.

Our all powerful and merciful God
none have loved You as much as I will love
You, after You give me today, sweatless hands.

No other can give what You do.
You are the beginning and end.

All that is good is from You.

With You, all things done?

All of your problems are hidden inside. All of your flaws, masked. Well, you didn't fool me. You're just as dark and twisted and stained as me except your skin is thicker so it holds in the stench, rot, and decay better than mine."

I must've gotten on a roll or something because the next thing I remember I was met by 3 police cars. Priority 1. Lights and sirens with backup. They pinned me to the ground in front of the church and twisted me up

into a flesh-and-blood origami. Apparently, I must have divulged that I helped people commit suicide which, in essence, makes me an accomplice to murder which is why I'm telling you this story from the inside of a jail cell. It's not much different than my life. In a lot of ways, it's better. It's hard to miss freedom when you haven't really experienced it.

Well. That's it. I finally got what I wanted. No responsibility. The demons still come at night, but as I sit here in my concrete mansion, my soul begins to recover and believe that it, too is a mansion. Someday, I will begin to be able to put the pieces together, but it's not like I don't have the spare time. Three consecutive life sentences earns you a little mental breathing room. The part I'm trying to understand is why I was allowed to endure all of this. It seems unfair and cruel, and yet, I have found peace in knowing that I don't know. Upon careful consideration, all I was searching for was some form of community. For once in my life, I just wanted to be known; I didn't want to be fixed by anyone. I didn't want cute advice on how I could improve my life or become a better person. I just wanted to listen and be listened to. Now, I have my own community. They are my fellow inmates. Now I am known. California knows me as CA-9342A7. Now I can talk and be listened to. Granted it's by a payed professional, but I'm not complaining.

Maybe someday I'll figure it out. But, until then, I'll just keep removing the stains and preparing the meals for all of the inmates here. That, I'll never be able to escape.



Patrick Hoffman

Title: Faitos

Media: B & W Photograph

Dimensions: 9.25 X 7.125

Cherubs

Mary C. Loeffler

They feel foreign
cupping the breasts
that cover the ribcage
that guards the lungs.
I shall never be satisfied with them.

I look down
into my lap
at the two clasped hands
cowering
like wicked children
lumpy like two chunks
of misshapen origami.
They are mistakes, knockoffs.

I attempt to write
but their joints stiffen
as if dipped in Plaster of Paris.
These dilapidated vessels
their dim capillaries
are thick
with lemon curd
like a stale pastry
not even a starving dog
would gnash at.

My first thought is to put
them toward a useful end,
pit and gore them
feed the pulp to my dog
and serve the skins
with leeks, green onions, and fennel,
like a couple of
game birds
past their prime.

But after a moment of clarity,
I begin to twist and shove
loosen and liberate.
I smack them against walls
catch them in doors
beat them against tile.
They break off easily like
flea market porcelain
and initially
I toss them in a shoe box.

The dark crescents of dirt
accenting their translucent paleness,
they look almost pretty
almost
folded against each other.
They're two fat little cherubs,
a set of stillborn twins
in a jar of formaldehyde.

I gnaw open a window,
and the hands jump
out of the box
to perch on the meat of my arm
as I extend it outside.
Their fingers arch and crack
preparing for flight
and only now do I feel
a slight twinge of regret.

Waving with stubs,
I watch my right hand
and its backward twin
cut up the backside
of the sky
like two thrushes dancing.

Against the puckered blue
they are beyond my breasts
and all my twitching organs.

They are beyond the hunt.

Just ten feathers fluttering
to something else
beyond my comprehension.

Robert Tysl Award and Vivian Stewart Award

How To Kill A Poetess

Mary C. Loeffler

Seek her out first
under sallow moon heaving
anointing her mouth
with the light of
rhythm and rhyme.

Through the poplars
she screams to the sky
thirsty for a life
where the stars
are inches from her face
and mountains lie in crumbs
at her lush recital.

Lure her in with
the cunning
of your whisper
the spell
of your pause.
She'll sit down,
enraptured,
letting it run the course
down her chest,
smooth and hot.

You will then extend
your glimpse
to the heart
that beats
through the bones
hummingbird swift
and weightless
as a word.

Stumble the steps
toward her chair
lean in as if to
inhale her,
until you are so close.
you can feel
her eyelashes
blinking
against your cheek.

Reach through
her breast,
ignoring both choke and
cry,
the fleshy croon of
5,000 terrible poems
and 100 still worse.

She is neither poetess
nor daughter
neither mother
nor monster
just a lame, tepid heap
and no verse
will ever revive her.

Tighten your grip
on the heart
which will spurt and skip
in your palm,
the ventricles
petal soft
curdling in silence.

Once it lies still,
simmer it
in a mixture of
honey and cloves
until crusted with glaze.
Closing your eyes,
it seems cast iron
a bulky knot
dry as rosin
rolling easily over the palms
without so much as
a syllable
out of kilter.

Finally, feed it
to her dog,
its sooty muzzle
wrinkled into a snarl.
Bare your teeth in return
while you watch him
swallow.
The dog will lick its chops
then its crotch.
Now here's the part
where words will fail you
your mediocre poet's mouth
devoid of reproach,
utters no prayer.

You owe her at least this,
but you clamp shut,
run as fast as you can
into the poplars
when the dog
clears the fence.



Katrina Coronel

Title: Sisters

Media: Ceramic Clay

Dimensions: Unavailable



Eleanor DeLeon

Untitled

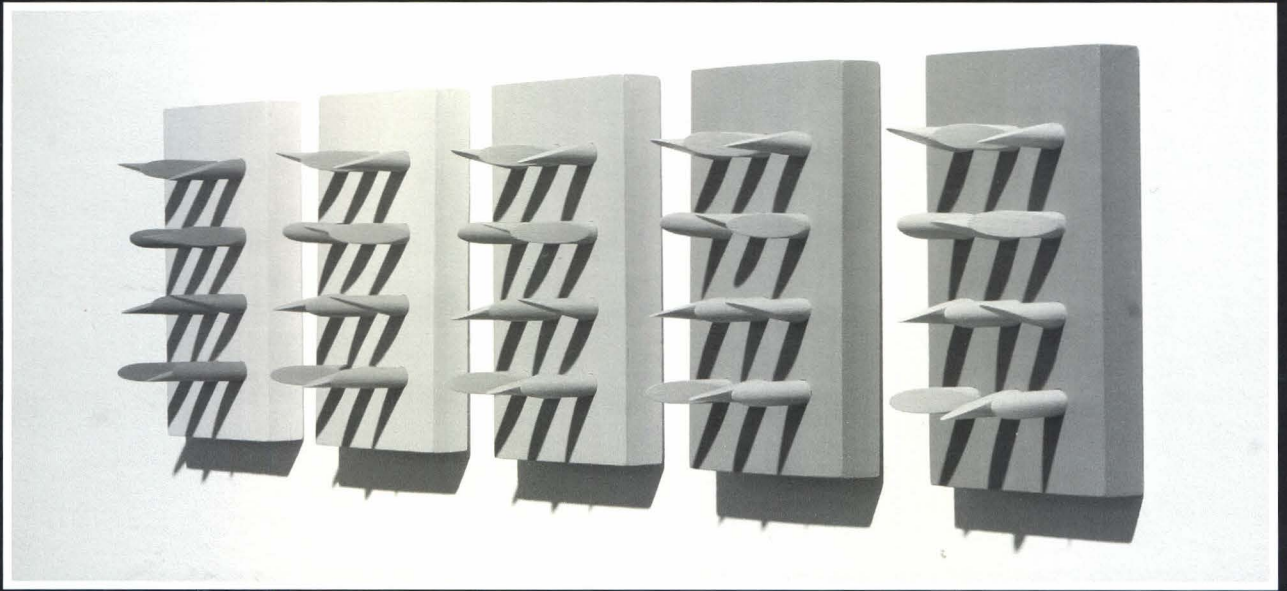
Media: Ceramic

Dimensions: 13 x 5

The Narrow

Jay Fox

Out on the
road, waken
late today
the people
calmed, inside
the myth
Was it the
music debris?
Or a
tarnished machine?
Time equals
soft eyelid,
hard sight
serpent-like,
and memory
is a honeycomb
you drink from.



Sandy Barney

Untitled

Media: Wood/acrylic

Dimensions: 3.5 x 6.25



Christy Anderson

Title: Butterfly

Media: Color Photography

Dimensions: 4 x 6

Dried Floor

Karen Brady

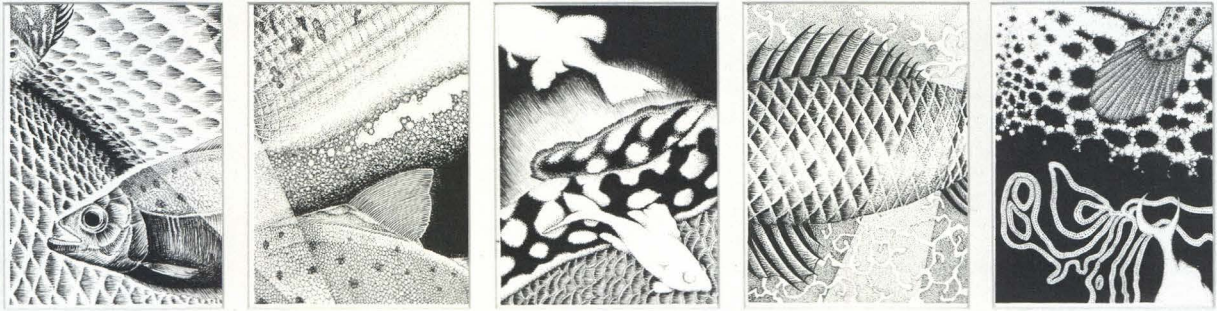
My pen nudges the paper,
asks it to write more
about the Utah heat, begging to hear
of a room with three windows
squeezed between
dusty pink walls.

A small creaky bed snuggles into the corner
kicking off the Mexican throw,
letting it spill from the corner to the floor.

Wood floor,
used to be brown,
now it's gray, with yellow dust
gathering
in the smooth depressions
carved by insomniac pacing.
Worn slippers rub over
and over
and over
the grain.

Wearing the floor down to new colors.
Orange like the mug on the table,
blue like the triangles in the Mexican throw
green weaving in and out of the lampshade.

The fan on the table
cracks its neck,
blowing the papers across the old bed
asking them to forget
the color of the walls.

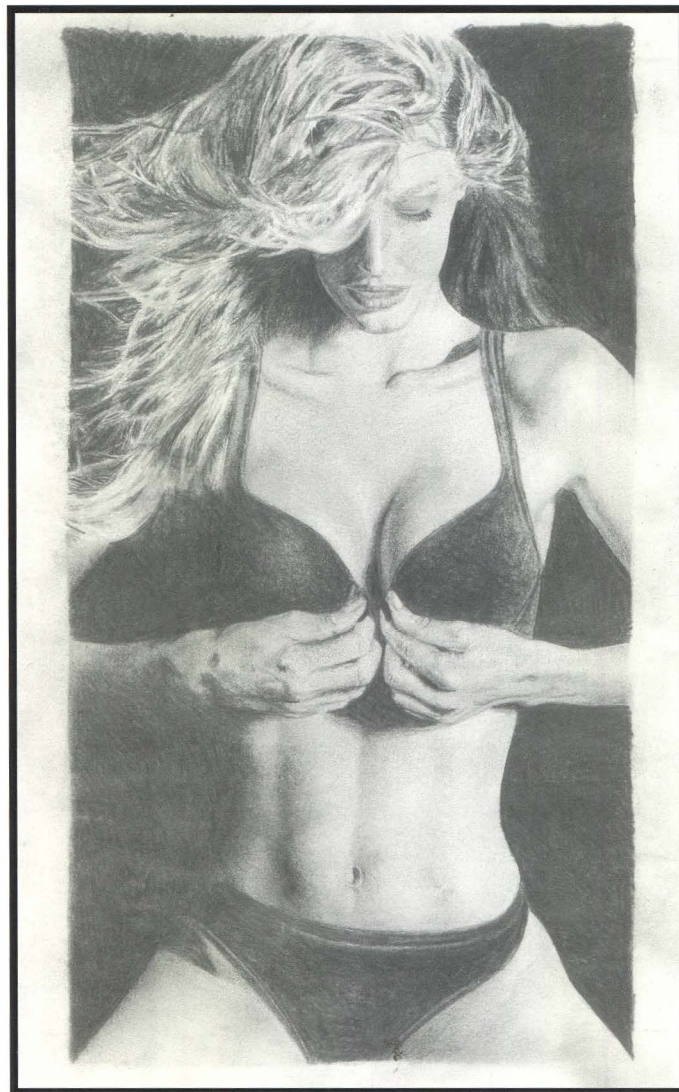


Christine Rhim

Title: 5 Panel Project: Fish

Media: Ink

Dimensions: 27 x 11.375



Stevie Yeaman

Untitled

Media: Pencil

Dimensions: 5.75 x 10.75

Campfire Trail

Karen Brady

Trees walk beside me.
In the shadows of night,
branches reach up to peel
stars from the sky.

A group of pines gather
around the orange fire up ahead
glowing duskily, smoky
against clear-carved outlines of oaks.
Oaks and beech.

I flash my light into the woods
a breeze sprints by,
yet the leaves are still,
broken pieces of darkness
frozen by a white beam.

I walk toward the crackling warmth
and the trees walk with me.



Bridget Hoffman

Title: Abandon in The ruins of Summer

Media: Oil Painting

Dimensions: 24.125 x 18

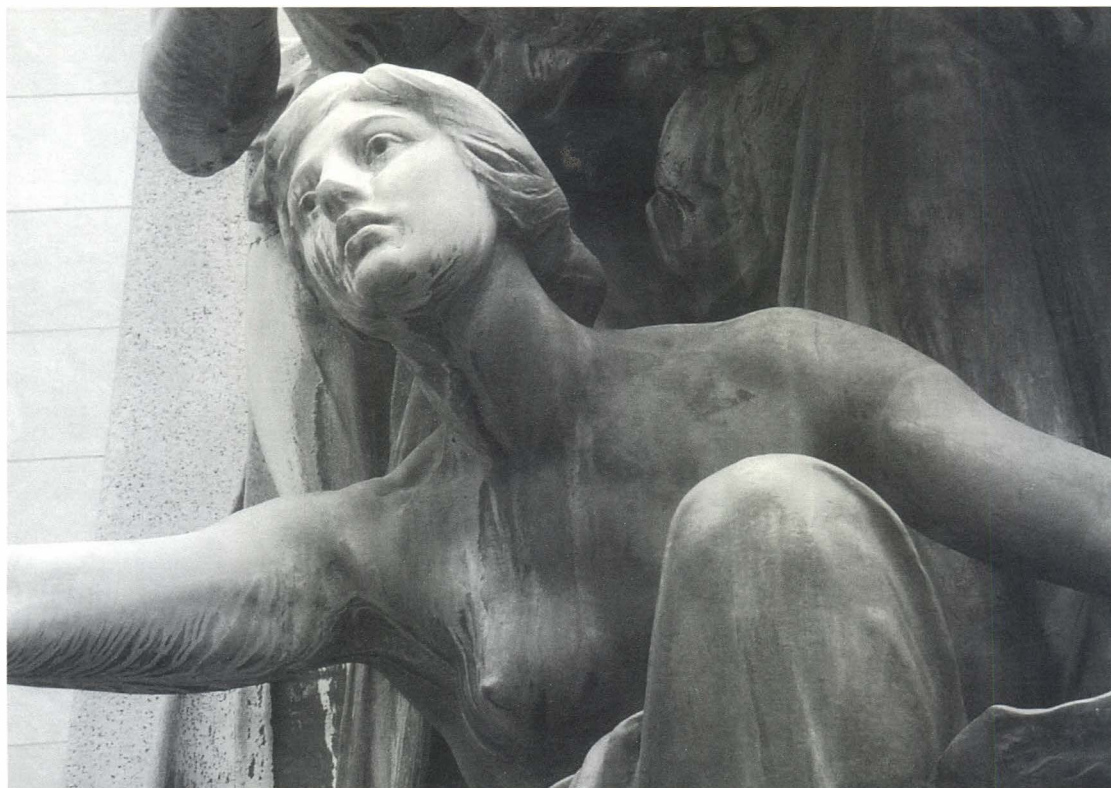


Meghann M. Lethson

Title: Mama's Flowers

Media: Watercolor

Dimensions: 16.5 x 19.375



Elizabeth Lahay

Title: Believe

Media: Photography

Dimensions: 10.5 x 7.25

The Day Sculpture Died

I was late,
the shortcut was behind the building.
There you were
lifeless, bloodless sprawled on the grass.
stopped mid-step,
it was a shock seeing you like that.
You had been so smooth,
now weathered, wrinkled, and faded.
I remember when
morning sun caressed your curves,
When you were strong, tall
people stopped, pondered your essence.
Like a first wife,
you have been replaced.
Affection has been transferred to
a shiny new trophy piece, more expensive and modern.

Nancy Higgins



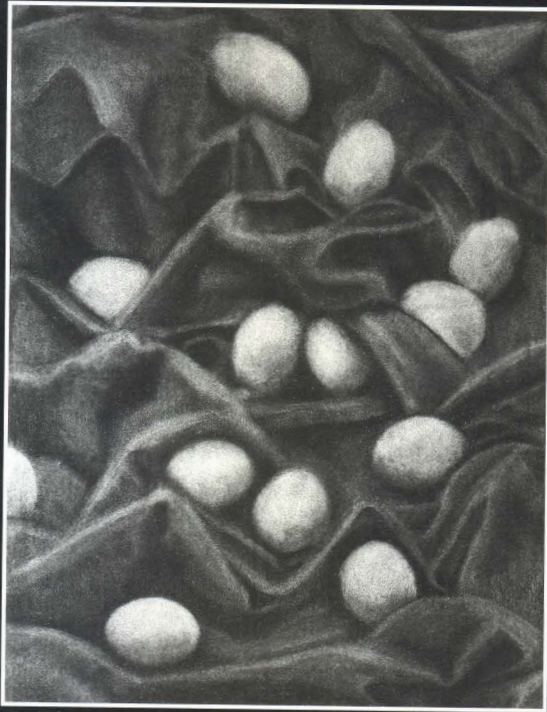
Christine Rhim

Title: White Flowers

Media: Charcoal Pencil

Dimensions: 17.75 x 20 .875

Ray Mills Award: Christine Rhim

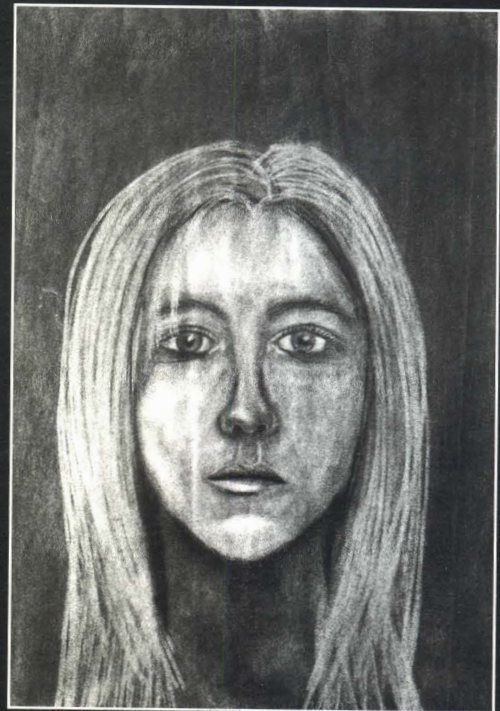


Holly Farley

Untitled

Media: Charcoal

Dimensions: 18.375 x 24



Kristen Urban

Title: Self Portrait

Media: Charcoal

Dimensions: 18 x 24



Eleanor DeLeon

Untitled

Media: Ceramic

Dimensions: 13 x 5