

Connective Tissue

art and literature at UTHSCSA



2008 • Volume I

Connective Tissue

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The works published in this magazine were selected based on their artistic and literary merit and do not reflect the personal views of the Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics or those of the editorial staff.

Front Cover:
Ben Francisco
My Mental Journal
Acrylic on masonite

Back Cover:
Kimberly Anne Warshauer
The Boys
Acrylic on canvas

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John Martin

Untitled





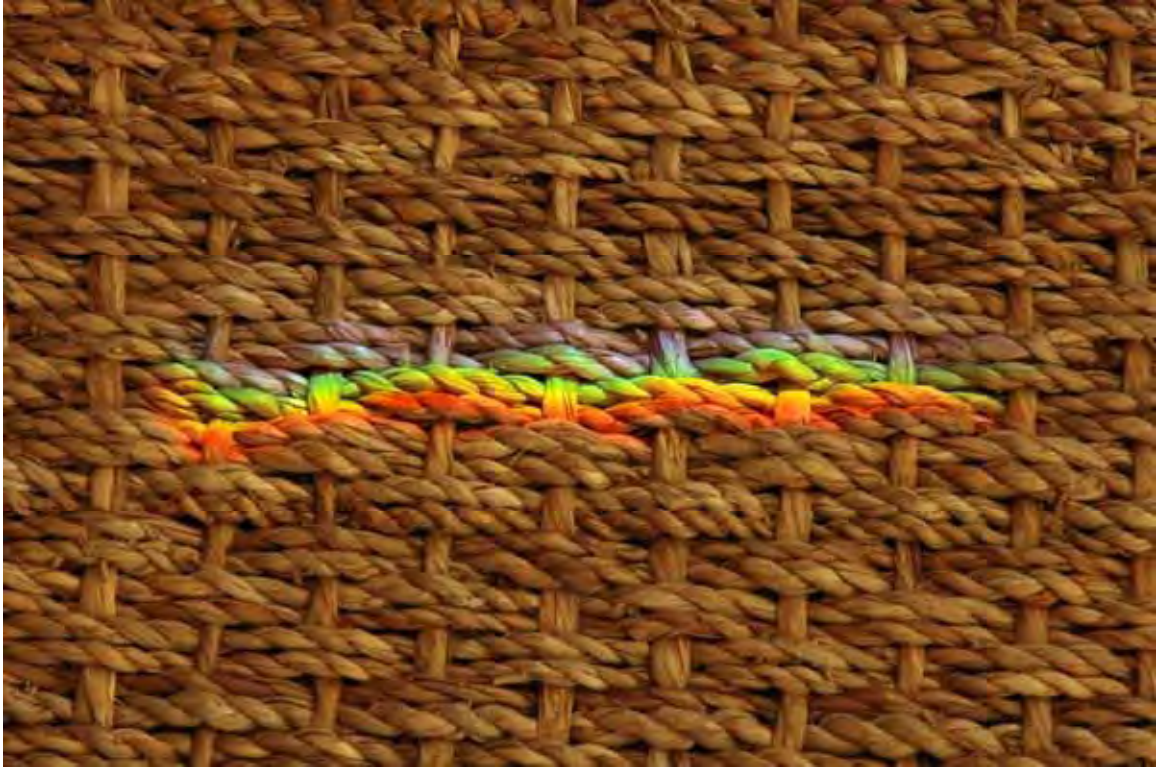
Julie Wibskov

Baywater Peacocks



Joseph Harrison

El Nopal



Joseph Harrison

Solar Dispersion Seagrass Rug



Joseph Harrison

Camel in the Morning

Nameer Kirma

On the Blue Pond

What is that hanging up there in the sky?
Maybe a sun sending down rays of scented light,
Or maybe a bright flower we notice as we swim by.
The tiny waves with peaks and valleys pass underneath,
Imprinting traces of memory that may be lost in our wake.
What is it that we are looking for as we swim on this blue pond?
Maybe food made out of tiny creatures and tiny plants.
Sometimes we dip our beaks inside the cool water, maybe there
Is something to eat - or maybe a cloud above
Will quench our thirst and add moisture to our feathered wings.

Anonymous

Cactus

Lucy thinks cars feel smaller when they're still. It's early morning July, but already the sun is high and the streets the kind of hot you should never cross barefoot, even at a run. Lucy's brother Jake, in the front seat, is on the track team with a boy moved down from Iowa who took a mean bet and raced shoeless on the summer asphalt last month. Lucy was there, under the bleachers where the sun striped your legs and the air smelled like hot metal, waiting for Jake to finish practice and drive them home. She watched the Iowa boy start out like a pale flash and come in scared, and when he sat on the bleachers above her head the bottoms of his feet were black with blisters in the toe creases. Stupid, said Jake, but Lucy could put herself on the inside of that boy and feel the quick-breath excitement turning to hurt, the fear of knowing the only way out of the fenced-in track was to keep running and to let yourself burn.

Lucy and Jake and their mother sit in their blue car in the line of traffic stretching towards Austin. Lucy's father has a condo there, under a few live oaks and next to a tangle of highways. He has visitation rights. Lucy asked her mother last week if she could have no-visitation rights, but her mother did not laugh, just looked at her hard and said, *finish your meat*.

Now her mother says, *Watch it Jake*, because Jake is driving and as the traffic crawls along he is roaring the car forward, then stomping the brakes in a stutter of start-stops that keep the beat with his CD. Jake is visiting her father too, but really that means he will be there for breakfasts and out all weekend with his friends. Lucy's father keeps the condo windows closed and so she will be alone with him as he sleeps all day in the thick air that's as quiet as the inside of Lucy's head when she turns her hearing aids off.

Sugar and molasses! says Lucy's mother, as Jake almost taps the bumper of the pickup in front of them. Lucy knows she says this instead of saying "shit," but she usually spits it out so hard it doesn't sound much nicer. They are at the top of a hill and down the road a thick column of smoke curls up from a clearing and the cars crawl by. Lucy rolls down her window to smell for smoke and gets one cloudy breath, hot and tarry, before her mother pushes the button from the front seat and the glass rises with a squeak against her fingers. *The air is on, Sugar*, she says, watching her daughter in the rear-view mirror.

Lucy's father likes her hearing aids. When he used to take her to stick her feet in the icy water of Barton Springs, he would introduce her to the little kids that swam past: *This is Lucy. See her hearing aids?* And Lucy would want to show them how she could dive, could swim all the way across underwater, but her father would shake his head. *What if there's trouble? What if you can't hear us calling?* So she would sit on the edge with her face hot and her hearing aids on and only her feet in the water. And now there is not even that, because Lucy's father hasn't felt like swimming in a long time. When she hugs him he smells like dust and dry leaves.

The blue car bumps along, and in the front seat Jake is playing bongos on the steering wheel and their mother's eyes are closed. They are crossing the burn line now, where a drainage ditch held the fire back until it ate down through the grass and blackened the soil. The field is charred and flat, and in the middle is a clump of cactus still standing. They are huddled together and their flat arms are shiny and look like bruised metal, purple and bronze. Lucy reaches behind each ear and clicks off her hearing aids. She puts her window down again, keeps her finger on the button in case her mother wakes up, and breathes in the burnt grass and sun. In the front seat they are calling for her, yelling at her, but Lucy is floating in the wide quiet. She stretches her fingertips towards the cactus, wondering if touching it would feel like a hot pan, or a warm bleacher, or if at the first pressure your finger would go right through.



Matthew Kaplan

Untitled 1

Pranjali Gadgil

The Whirlwind

Swept off the ground by a fine summer breeze
Two leaves off two different trees
The whirling wind drove them closer
Together they rose higher and higher

Ecstatic to reach the skies unseen
The world was like it had never been
Would this journey go on forever?

The dust soon settled and the whirlwind died
Heard by none, the two leaves cried
Drifted down two different streams
What about those hundred dreams?
Would they meet again in a river?

Forever unfolds to be never.



Tim Presley

Untitled



Kate Robert

Koh Samui Beach, Thailand



© J. Jeff Andrews, M.D.

J. Jeffrey Andrews

Las Vegas Fantasy

Harley Retires

Professor Henry Harley was to be honored.

After 30 years of studying and teaching history in the academic halls of Brennerman College, he had attained emeritus status and was stepping down from formal active teaching. A dinner was to be held in his honor. It was to be a formal affair with his colleagues, former students, and deans of the college invited. A call had been sent out to people whose lives he had touched, and all had been invited to join in the celebration of his academic life.

He remembered the last such departmental dinner, when Professor Peake retired. Almost 100 people had come, singing the professor's praise. Several had made impromptu speeches about what a key role the professor had played in their lives. Professor Harley doubted that quite as many people would come to his own retirement celebration as had come to Professor Peake's-- Professor Peake had been a showman and had been very popular-- but he nevertheless looked forward to this evening with anticipation, albeit with a bit of trepidation. He was inclined to shyness and was not sure how he should handle the salutations and honorific praise. He had practiced a short but pithy response which he hoped would sound light and off the cuff, and also reasonably intelligent.

He had decided to wear his tuxedo, (which seemed to be most appropriate for this formal occasion). Unfortunately, upon trying it on a half hour ago, he had discovered that he had real difficulty buttoning his pants. He had apparently grown significantly at the belt line during the last two years. His wife, Trudy, was letting out the seat at this moment while he waited on the bed in his shorts. His jacket was also tight but that problem could be solved fairly easily by simply leaving it unbuttoned.

His stomach turned while he waited-- his digestion was not as good as it had been once. He hoped that he would not be embarrassed by growling or the involuntary & untimely passage of gas.

He trimmed his gray beard carefully. He had had a haircut two weeks before, and this looked fine today, though he wished he could make it a bit thicker on top. It was normal at such occasions for pictures to be taken, and these were frequently placed in the next quarterly alumni journal (though he noted that the journal lately tended to focus on new faculty training rather than the faculty who were leaving.)

His wife Trudy had once been very pretty. She now had considerably more girth than when he had married her, and her recent surgery for cataracts had required that she wear very thick eye-glasses which gave her a goggle-eyed look which could be best compared to a frog's.

Trudy brought his pants into the room and sat heavily on the bed. She was already dressed, having chosen a brown dress with ruffles around the throat. Henry and she had argued about the dress earlier-- He did not feel it was formal enough. She retorted that if he had made more money by accepting the position at Vassar 14 years ago, she would have been able to afford better dresses, and the brown dress would not be her best one. As it was, it would have to do.

“Your pants are done,” she announced. “There wasn’t much room to let out, but it will have to do.”

“I don’t need much,” he lied. It would be uncomfortable and a little obvious if he took off his coat, but nothing could be done about it. He wiggled into the pants, took a deep breath, and fastened the fly. He tightened the belt to prevent an accident. He sat gingerly on the bed. He would have to be careful if he didn’t want to split the seams.

It was just Trudy and him now. His daughter was married and had moved far away. A greeting card and a small gift had arrived two days before. It would have been better if she had come herself, but he could understand why this was impossible. With good luck, she would be able to afford to come and visit in another year or two.

The doorbell rang and Trudy answered, while Henry adjusted his bow tie. It would be crooked again in 5 minutes, but at least it was all right now. He looked at himself in the mirror, sucked in his stomach, and thrust out his chest to gain a look of respectability. He made a mental note to assume this pose whenever pictures were taken.

“Hurry up, Henry!” yelled Trudy from downstairs. “George and Clara are here!”

“I’ll be right down,” he yelled. He stood up again and loosened the belt and fly while he bent over to put on his shoes, and then refastened again after standing up again. He carefully walked downstairs.

“Well, here comes the man himself,” exclaimed George, looking up from the bottom of the stairs and grinning broadly. He was a tall, florid, outgoing man who was elegantly patrician in his appearance, though perhaps a bit too solidly built. He was chairman of the English department, and a man with whom Henry was good friends, even though he was a little intimidated by him. When they were together in public, there was never any question who was the leader and who was the follower.

Henry smiled weakly, holding in his stomach, and feeling slightly embarrassed at the attention. He kissed Clara on the cheek and took George’s outstretched hand and shook it. All he could think to say was, “Well, let’s get it all over with.”

They all laughed, and the wives exchanged glances and then small talk as they went out to George’s car. George and Henry sat in front, while Clara and Trudy took the back. With his usual exuberance, George asked, “How does it feel to be giving it all up?”

Henry had had the same question asked so often during the last month that he was sick to death of it. He had a practiced, pat answer, however, which he used now. “I’m really not giving it up, you know. There are a lot of projects which I haven’t had time to pursue. Now I’ll have time. It will just be a very long sabbatical for me.”

George nodded and said the expected retort. “I envy you. That sounds tremendous.”

"It is," confirmed Henry, and thought 'I wish I had a quarter for every time this conversation has occurred.

Both lapsed into silence. The women happily babbled in the back until they reached the faculty club.

George let the three of them off at the entrance and then went to park the car. They waited for him and walked in together. The club was an older building and the interior was 1920's Collegiate, with rich carved wooden friezes, old English furniture, and couches in the foyer. It was very comfortable. Henry wondered why they had picked the faculty club for this celebration. It was not very large, and the President's Room seated only about 50 people. Henry thought for a moment and realized that a 50 person room was probably enough. He excused himself and went to the washroom. He would join them in a moment, he said.

He entered a stall, unfastened his belt and fly, and let a sigh of relief escape. He scratched, passed a bit of gas, refastened, washed his hands, adjusted his bow tie, and went back out. The others had gone on. He went to the President's Room. No one was there. He stopped, puzzled, not sure where they were.

Trudy came up behind him and put her hand on his shoulder. "The party's in the Buckley Room," she said.

"The Buckley Room? But that room can't hold more than 20 people!"

"It's a very cozy group of our friends," she said, trying to hide her disappointment. She led him into the room.

He was surrounded by smiling faces, and he shook all the hands of the men, and kissed the women on the cheek, and accepted congratulations from everyone. About twenty people were there. All the people who had to come -- the dean and his wife, his colleagues in the history department, and a few other department heads-- were there. A few close friends had come. He saw no students, but when he thought about it, he was not surprised. He was not very close to any of his students now. He wondered how Professor Peake had attracted so many to his party. And while he could rationalize the poor attendance at this party, he was also embarrassed by it.

Cocktails were served, and he took a martini instead of his usual white wine. He exchanged small talk with several people and then ran out of things to say. He joined in a larger group and listened quietly while George explained the word play of "As You Like It" to the chairman of the mathematics department. George was very interesting and very good at thinking on his feet, something at which Henry was very bad.

Henry's glass became empty too quickly, and when the cocktail waitress took orders for more drinks, he ordered a white wine, which would last him until dinnertime.

Trudy & Clara were sitting along the wall next to each other. Both seemed happy

and were having an animated conversation.

Henry felt ill at ease. As a rule, he felt useless at cocktail parties. He would feel much better when dinner was ready.

It seemed a long time before dinner was served. Apparently, they were waiting for some stragglers who never came. Finally, George organized the group into tables. The Dean and his wife and George and Clara joined Henry and Trudy at the head table. Henry noted that despite the small room, there were several seats empty, including an entire table in the opposite corner of the room.

Wine was served and the Dean, and then George, offered toasts first to Henry and then to Trudy. The Dean's toast was to the point, praising Henry's scholarship and teaching ability. It was a nice touch, considering that the Dean was an economist who had never read even the title of anything Henry had written and had never set foot in one of Professor Harley's lecture halls. George praised Henry primarily as a friend. Both the Dean and George spent more time on Trudy than on Henry. She was the "companion at home" the "power behind the throne" the "light of inspiration", the "good lady behind a good man", etc., etc. Henry had a hard time maintaining his smile as they continued on.

Dinner was prime rib, with buttered cauliflower and carrots and yorkshire pudding. Once, Henry had been able to eat such dinners without indigestion. Now, the combination ensured borborygmy, cramps, and gas. The red wine did not help matters. Although the food was very good, and Henry enjoyed eating it, he soon regretted eating it all, and before desert, he excused himself and returned to the men's room. He entered the same stall and once again loosened his pants. He felt dizzy; he had had a little too much wine. He walked to the sink and splashed some water on his face. He thought about the evening and decided it was an embarrassing flop. He looked in the mirror. His tie was crooked, his hair ruffled, and his face flushed. He could see how poorly fitted his suit was, and when he buttoned his pants, his paunch hung over in an embarrassing way. He looked terrible.

"Tonight is a disaster," he thought. He had to sit down, and he reentered the stall, sat on the toilet, and put his head in his hands. He brooded over the small attendance, the cursory summary of his entire life's work, his ineptitude in social interplay. "This was not an honor," he thought. "This was a revelation of my failures to everyone." He was humiliated. Moreover, he saw this evening as a remark upon his entire life's work. He had never made a single major scholarly contribution. Indeed, several of his students had completely surpassed him. One, Charles Birmingham, had become one of the foremost historians of American history in the country. His weekly television show,

in which history was truly brought to life, had made him known throughout America. Henry had watched the show once or twice and had been impressed by the man's skill. Henry, on the other hand, had never surpassed the role of history professor at a small, nondescript college. It was a lackluster career, indeed. He saw clearly now that his entire life had been a sham and a waste of energy. And he himself was now simply an aged, mediocre, plodding failure.

At least he had been consistent, failing during his short reign as departmental chief as well as he had in scholarship. He had thought, however, that his saving grace was that he was a good teacher. Tonight it was clear to him that this was imaginary as well. His mortification was complete. He passed a large quantity of gas and saw this as a comment upon this night and his life.

He stood up, wiped his eyes, and went back to the mirror. It would not do to let Trudy suspect how mortifying this was. He felt he must put on the best face possible, if only for her sake.

He walked back to the Buckley Room. The rest of the people were standing about when he entered, and he smiled at a few. He had missed dessert.

George was telling a story when he entered. After finishing it, he noticed Henry and came over. "Ah, Henry," he said. "You've come back. We've been waiting for you. We planned coffee in another room." He took Henry's arm, and maintaining his usual run of chitchat, led him to the President's Room. The doors were closed. When they entered, Henry saw a room full of people, and there was applause. George led him through the crowd of people to a chair, and asked him to sit down. Henry was confused. He found himself facing a television set.

George said, "This is a recording of the end of Charles Birmingham's television show two weeks ago. Did you see it?"

Henry shook his head. He watched very little television.

George turned on the television. A commercial flag led first, and then the urbane face of Charles Birmingham came on the screen.

"I wish to give you one more example of American history before we close tonight. Many times, a single event or a single person in history acts as a catalyst to begin a chain reaction leading to a particularly momentous event. This can apply to individual lives as well. The proper stimulus at the right time can set an individual upon a track toward success or accomplishment which he or she might not otherwise approach.

"I was personally influenced dramatically early in my career by an instructor in history at a small college in the Midwest. This man taught me how to make history come alive. He separated me from the mere facts and dates and made me see the

symmetries in history, ironies of history, and the tragedy and comedy of history. I owe a debt of gratitude to this man higher than I can ever repay. He made me see a beauty, and showed me how I could also impart it to you.”

“That man will be retiring soon.”

“I know that I am only one of hundreds of students he has touched over the many years he has taught. In history, we learn that a man’s actions have the greatest impact when they prompt the positive actions of other people. He has prompted the positive actions of hundreds. And thus, I must salute tonight a man who has been one of the more influential men in America over the past four decades. Professor Henry Harley of Brennerman College, thank you very much, and God bless you on your retirement.”

The picture faded. Henry was dumbstruck and barely heard the applause which surrounded him. It lasted for a long time, until George silenced it.

“Henry, we have a present for you,” he said. He led him to a table on which were piled letters and books. “These are books written by your students. There are over 100 of them. They have all been autographed and given to you by the authors. They speak to your accomplishments far better than any of us could.”

Henry took one of the books and opened it. There was a very kind greeting on the frontispiece. He opened another and another. He put his hands on the table and leaned on them. He could not talk yet. Finally, he whispered, “Thank you. Thank you all very much.”

The people in front heard him and whispered his words to those standing behind. There was a smattering of applause. One by one, the students and faculty members came by to thank him and congratulate him and shake his hand.

An hour later, the room was empty except for Henry and Trudy, George and Clara, and 100 books. George helped Henry box the books and carry them to the car.

“Charles Birmingham’s broadcast prompted a large response. When we saw there were too many people coming to allow a full dinner, we decided to have an intimate gathering with close friends first, and then the ceremony,” he explained.

“It was the finest moment of my life,” said Henry. “But you know, one of the ironies of history is that very few people ever attain credit for their best achievements. I’m very lucky.”

George smiled. “Stop teaching, Henry. You’re retired. Remember?”
Henry spent much of the rest of his life reading 100 books, over and over.



Kate Robert

Baby Elephant, Thailand

Andrea Whitlock

Tricycle Icicles





Andrea Whitlock

San Antonio Ice Storm, January 2007

Tyler Jorgensen

Autumn Ending

It still feels like I'm holding my blue-sweatered girl!
Looking down at my shirt, seeing little specks of blue,
Up at the stars, seeing little specks of you—
These remnants, these reminders'll just have to do
Dreaming in blue
Dreaming of you
Of the last fall night I held you,
And the last red leaf you crumpled bare-footed,
And the way dear God restored our souls defeated,
And my heart broke not for the season,
 But for the girl
 Whose laugh replaced the coyote's as my favorite.



David Rodriguez

Golden Gate Bridge—overcast

FINGERPAW

Fingerpaw,
Dark skinned man,
I see you squatting, looking
Staring!

Pale One!
Her back to you
Crouching
Hunched
Over boiled root
As pale as her.

Fingerpaw ascends
Hoisted by invisible hands,
Like mother used to lift me,
And sets on a branch,
Tail hooking under,
Cupping it
like palm cups water.
Looking down, Staring.
Staring!
No sound!

Am I prey?
Pale One raises her ears.
Now they're erect
Tuning out background.
Focusing, focusing.
No sound!
Am I prey?

Fingerpaw communes with Tree
Sister of all trees
And becomes a branch
Among brother branches.

Pale One stands,
Leaving uneaten root behind,
Lips pursed gazing upward,
Gazing into shapes among leaves,
Waiting, waiting!

Nameer Kirma

Artist Statement

I wrote *Fingerpaw* a few years back. I don't remember exactly the day or place but rather the feeling that came as I was looking at my fingers, a feeling that was associated with an image of a primitive, prehistoric being. Fingerpaw is a primordial creature that may exist in our subconscious. Pale One is his alter ego or his complement. Although she's engaged in a human activity, eating cooked food, she isn't quite human. If Fingerpaw is the consciousness of an animal that's about to become human, Pale One is the physical body of this animal on the verge of humanity. The feeling that inspired this poem is that of the tension just preceding the moment of creation, the joining of Fingerpaw and Pale One.

Tyler Jorgensen

These Shall Remain

There's the burning of old photographs
 And the subsequent green flames,
 The electrons falling down
from some mountaintop experience,
campfires and s'mores
and a summertime love
("we promised to write").
And they're screaming of man's
glorious potential in quantized carols
of yellow and blue;
their fingers numb,
stomachs and hearts in their throats,
praying to Bohr
that their chutes won't fail.
 How can they keep up this energy back on the ground?
Then there's the mass of a billion suns around which we twirl,
till we're closer to our system's core with each new song
But let's not you and me get sucked in yet—
I defy them to trap this light! they've not yet played our song.
Then there's old Miss Hallie with her wrinkled hands
 to squeeze
 and her telling us one more time
 of the debutante ball and the wolves
 that used to nearby linger
And how these good things shall remain.

Tyler Jorgensen

Artist Statement

I wrote *These Shall Remain* after a trip I took to the Chisos Mountains of West Texas with some high school students I was teaching in Houston. I sent it on the back of a postcard that featured photographer James Evans' picture *Hallie's Hands*. (Hallie Stillwell was a legendary ranchwoman in the Big Bend area of Texas.) Though I was a chemistry major and should be long over it, it still blows my mind that every time we see a color it's because an electron is falling back down from some high place and releasing its extra energy.

Anne Fonfa

Never Again

Never again will I be able to serve dinner, lift up my top and be the topless waitress (with something on top).

Never again will we walk arm in arm in the rain with his elbow bumping my breast (we talked of this in later years as one of our memorable moments).

Never again will I wear a 34D bra. Good and bad.

Never again will I fill out my silk high neck blouses.

Never again will my breasts be crushed in a mammography machine.

Never again will be my breasts be crushed against my lover's chest/breasts.

Never again will I catch men addressing my chest instead of my face. They certainly used to.

Never again will I be so relieved to remove my bra at the end of the day. I won't have deep red marks on my shoulders anymore either.

Never again. But then again, I'll never be 25 again either. And life goes on its merry way. And my husband just called me gorgeous in that totally believable way he has.

Anne Fonfa

Artist Statement

I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 44 – the first, and still only member of my family. I took to advocacy immediately. There are so many issues, I chose to focus on complementary and alternative therapies for a variety of reasons. One strong reason is that so many people with cancer are interested, another is that so many CAM modalities work for many of us.

I thought I could easily handle the second mastectomy, just eleven months after the first one. But suddenly I felt like I wasn't a woman anymore – I felt mutilated, no longer the brave Amazon, but someone else. I spent a few weeks with my siblings – my sister, and brother, with me mostly complaining and whining.

Back home in Manhattan, a young gay man passed me in the street – he whispered to me “Great bod”, and I regained my sense of humor and personhood in that moment.

A few weeks later I awoke and wrote this poem. My sister, the poet, tells me she rewrites and edits for years, I just wrote this one all at once. I still love it. By the way, I just turned 60.



Caesar Ricci

One in a Crowd

Caesar Ricci

Artist Statement

This is a photograph of a Darfurian girl in Goz Amir Refugee Camp in south-eastern Chad. She is one of the hundreds of thousands of Darfurian children displaced by the ethnic cleansing occurring in the Darfur region of Sudan. Even after fleeing across the border into Chad, people in this camp had still been attacked several times in cross-border incursions by the very same Sudan government-supported militias that massacred their people and destroyed their villages in Darfur. There is a definite need for strong international military protection of the refugee camps in both Darfur and Chad. The refugees also need improved medical care and more educational opportunities. For more information about the situation in Darfur and eastern Chad please visit www.greatestgood.net.



Joseph Harrison

Lincoln, NM

Joseph Harrison

Artist's Statement

I photographed this man and woman at their booth at the annual Billy the Kid Days festival in Lincoln, New Mexico in the late summer of 2005. We spent some time talking about their crafts and what they do. He is a blacksmith who produces objects used in 18th and 19th century North America. He has done research to determine what objects were used and how they were manufactured to ensure that he is doing it in as authentic a manner as possible. For example, he uses metal files as his raw material since it was the most readily available high quality source of steel in frontier days in North America. He manufactured tools such as a collapsible tripod for holding a pot over a fire and combination flint striker-knife. His wife has Native American heritage and makes sage incense bundles and jewelry. They travel a circuit of festivals throughout the United States.

What emerges from the photo for me is a feeling of force arrayed in the vertical and horizontal dimensions. First, the force of gravity manifests itself in the structured and almost rigid poses assumed by the two artisans. Horizontally, there is a strong interpersonal force in the gravity of their expressions and the space between them bridged by the blacksmith's arm. I think that the photo is vaguely reminiscent of the early 20th century painting, *American Gothic*.

Julie Berry Wibskov

Jomiman

For someone who pours out his love
In all the bold colors at once,
Who stops time in the grocery aisle
Professing to me adoration,
And who, since a child, felt most other people
Were family and who enters four doors and six months
Through your heart upon meeting,
For him the raw nerve that shoots down his back
In a bolt is as real as his sense of connection,
Of letdown, as real as the promise God made
Him while dreaming. And all are surprising, by chance.
Neurons and passions go silently working
Till someday exposed by a fall or escape
Only minutes to jostle a backbone; eighteen years
To leave a bad marriage. And now,
Though he wakes in the memory of pain
He is dancing with me in our kitchen, bursting joy
At the gift of each other. As if witness of hell has
Woken him out of constraint and angels have blown
Extra oxygen over his blood.

Julie Berry Wibskov

Artist Statement

In this poem I tried to capture the essence of my best friend, my husband--his unhindered approach to the world and the inner life that fuels that. He was born with a rare generosity and openness that draws others in, and, yet, privately has endured many struggles that test this spirit. The way he has stepped out in faith when life is cruel is a testimony to the genuineness of his nature. The way he nurtures his blessings when life is magical and showers me with endless love is a daily inspiration. Old challenges and burdens are often exchanged for new ones, and they are reminders that we're not really in charge. But much more powerful than the burdens is the fire for what gives us joy, the hope that we'll have joy someday or the gratitude that we have it now. Being able to celebrate throughout anything means knowing how much worse it could be and how miraculous it is to be living our lives.

Tom Pillion

Fly Away

Does sky ever end? Is the earth very small?
The bodies we see - Is this it? Is this all?
But when you were born, I turned from the skies, before me the world
opened up in your eyes.

Fly away, and trust He'll show the way

The silk on my back, and the look of my hair, The green in my hands, and the
cars that I wear, They're nothing but chains, your beauty they'll hide,
Your soul never ends, it was meant to fly.

Fly away, and trust He'll show the way.

Tom Pillion

Artist Statement

The poem was originally written as lyrics to a song in response to the materialistic or reductionist view of human existence that is often encountered in the both the world of science/knowledge and the world of commerce/consumerism. "Fly away" is a reference to that part of ourselves that resists those tendencies and seeks to live a more genuine human life.

Artist Statement

My Mental Journal, Front Cover

I became involved heavily in art during my high school years. In the years since, I have had a need to create artwork in order to maintain a sense of balance and wholeness in my life. I have received most of my training and created hundreds of pieces in the realm of ceramics. One thing that has intrigued and motivated me is texture and the use thereof to create space and movement. Another aspect of ceramics that drives me to create is the fluidity of wet clay and the opportunity to mold it and yet allow it to be free of constraint. However, ceramics requires a lot of time and unfortunately, as a busy medical student I do not have extra time to go to a ceramics studio. In response to this I have taken up painting. Painting gives me the ability to use layers and texture in a way that fulfills my passion for line and motion and yet I can allow the paint to run free and form itself. As I apply paint, I allow it to express what I feel that it is trying to express without having pre-formed intents of what the end product “should” look like. I feel that this affords me the opportunity to create throughout the entire process. The opportunity to see amazing vistas and experience life on a much higher level might be missed if I am overly intent on walking a certain path. In the end, I believe that art should be a journey and not a pre-conceived notion of how the destination should appear.

During two days of my Christmas break this year I decided that I should paint—I felt a need to use my brain for creating rather than studying. The two pieces that compose “My Mental Journal” are the product of those few days. My idea was based on a sunset photograph of a friend that I had seen. In the end my painting looked nothing like the photograph, nevertheless it gave me the inspiration. As I mixed paint and applied it, I began to realize I was trying to emphasize all of the amazing sunsets that I have seen. Whenever I see a sunset like that, I have found that it is much better to take a mental picture than to try to capture the awe-struck feeling with a 35mm camera, because film, for me, is never able to completely describe the almost sacrosanct moment. It is my hope that these pieces help others recall pictures from their own mental journals.

