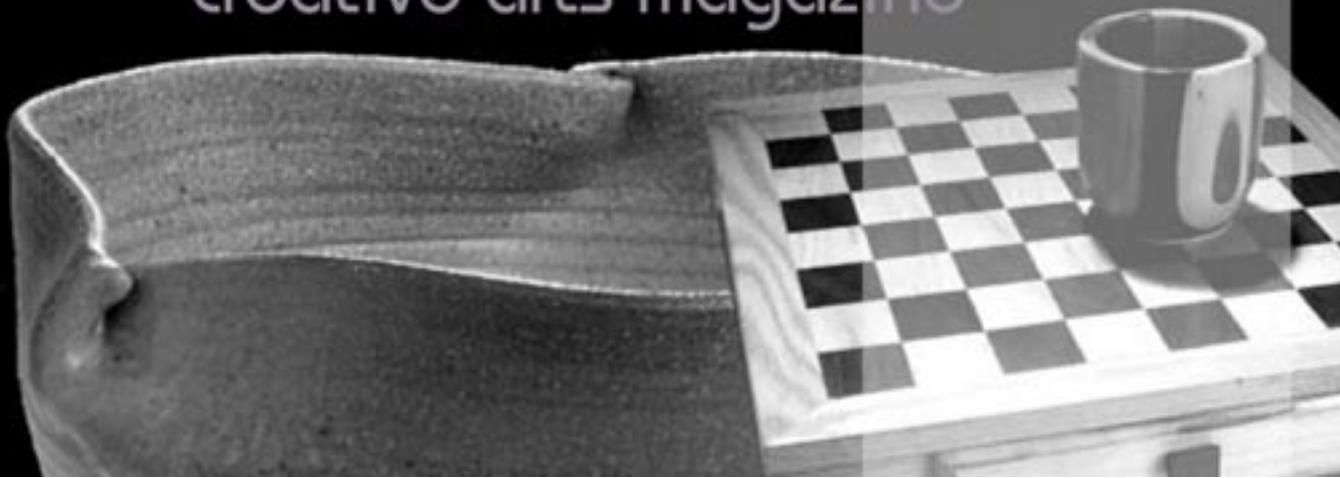


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# threshold

creative arts magazine



Cover Design  
by Matt Ely

Cover art front (clockwise):  
Ceramic by Mary Hirschberg, woodworking by  
Houston Mayfield, and ceramic by Tom Alward.

Cover art back (left to right):  
Ceramic by Pat Perz, and sculpture by Andrea Dooley.

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# threshold

creative arts magazine



Cards by Lauren Blauert

## about threshold

Threshold presents poems, stories and works of art created by Yavapai College students. The layout and design were produced by the Graphic Design II and Magazine Production classes.

The magazine was produced using Adobe InDesign 2.0, Adobe Illustrator 10, and Adobe Photoshop 7.0 software on Windows and Macintosh operating systems.

# butterfly

by Danielle Johnson

you have touched my wings  
the dusky powder glitters  
on thumb and forefinger where you  
kissed them closed and held me captive  
thin tremulous  
I pulse my crushed membranes  
flickering at the shock  
of flightlessness



Photograph by Tessa Sherman

"Huddled in  
the doorway  
under rainy  
skies."

Photograph by Vicki McGaw



# passing by

by Richard Sidy

"Help me," she cried and looked me in the eyes,  
A wrinkled, ebony-skinned mother,  
Huddled in the doorway under rainy skies.

Cold night and hollow voice her sole allies,  
All alone, she spoke not to another,  
"Help me," she cried and looked me in the eyes.

Startled out of dreams as I passed by,  
Damp discarded cardboard her lone cover,  
Huddled in the doorway under rainy skies.

Rushing toward my meeting warm and dry,  
Trembling outstretched fingers made me falter,  
"Help me," she cried and looked me in the eyes.

No time for guilt to force me to deny  
My ambitions and my well-fed pleasures,  
Halting in the doorway under rainy skies.

Two people face to face, no alibis,  
Fortunes linked, a moment of encounter,  
"Help me," she cried and looked me in the eyes,  
Huddled in the doorway under rainy skies.

# military life

by Justin Beurie

Horseshoes and hand-grenades pelt the rolling tanks  
You hinder their advance with rows of twisted metal scraps  
Mangled hedges made of broken cars and sharp tractor parts  
Disappear like hardened moss under caterpillar tracks  
Lob a Molotov and wait as their cabin starts to cook  
Soon, the soldiers burst up through the hatch, gasping for air.

Then they freeze inside your rifle sights, staring with an air  
Of hopeless surrender. Yeah, without their scary tanks,  
They're just boys whose mothers back home are cooking  
A meal alone with the meager rations and the pork scraps,  
Longing for their sons. Boys who make a couple of tracks  
In the Arabian snow, then come home in separate parts.

When siren winds up over the petrified city, it rips  
The chilly afternoon silence like a scream in the air,  
And every tormented citizen stops dead in their tracks  
You cannibalized a radio from one of those tanks,  
But the ionosphere is stormy, so it only picks up scraps,  
Scrambled chatter from the trenches: The final goose is cooked

And the last grain ground. So it's corpses that they cook  
Waifs in faded uniforms cut their bodies into meaty parts  
And pass the plate around, and the dogs get the scraps,  
And a fleshy, choking guilt hangs like gauze in the air  
As the boys eat in silence in a field of stranded tanks  
That got stuck in the depths of their own muddy tracks

You walk backwards in the sand, covering your tracks,  
Stalking soldiers with your bottle-bombs, patient as a cook  
Who slowly salts the helpless lobsters in their metal tank  
Any fearless boy who comes rumbling through these parts  
With his cannon thrust proudly like a phallus in the air  
Ends up humble, crumpled on a welded floor of scraps

The country is in ruins, and you scavenge on the scraps  
Every now and then, the siren stops you dead in your tracks  
Fleets graze the coast; a formation lumbers in the air  
But a helmet makes a skillet, and you've got some lard to cook  
So today, dinner prevails while the city falls apart  
Like the axles and the engines of the old, abandoned tanks

Mingling in the air, the scent of precious morsels cooking  
And the reek of tank fuel. The potent mélange attracts  
Flies that crawl on the wagon, scraps and broken cars.



Photograph by Paula Burr



Illustration by Jeff Lowry

# untitled

by Mike Jackman

I have been working at the Little Caesar's inside the Prescott Valley K-Mart for a little over two years now. As you walk into the store and look to your left, you'll see the darkest corner of K-Mart. That's Little Caesar's Pizza Station.

It's here that I spend a good deal of my life making pizzas for six dollars an hour. I'm not complaining. It's a simple fact. Nothing special. I'm just part of the system in the greatest capitalist market economy on Earth.

But my job is boring. There are little opportunities for any significant human interaction. And human contact is important, right? But still, in helping customers, the one aspect of the job that requires human interaction, one can't gain this kind of satisfaction.

"Uhh... how can I help you?" I usually say, mustering some degree of enthusiasm.

"Uhh... yeah, what kind of specials do ya have?" the baffled customer then replies.

"We have a large one-topping pizza for five dollars—there's actually a sign right there next to you." I point to the sign with my pen.

"What is that? A large?" staring at the sign slack jawed, the customer strokes his chin.

[Long pause]

"With one topping?" he looks back at me.

"Uhh... (sigh) yeah, just like the sign, the big sign, right there, says," I say as I contemplate jabbing the pen into my eye.

This is the typical thing that I deal with at work and, as you can see, there is much to be desired at my job. This kind of dialogue depresses me to no end. I am convinced that the human race has reached its apex. It's all down hill from here.

But that's another issue for another time.

So one day, after reading much of Marx and feeling quite indignant, I was at work doing the usual of "take order, make pizza, wait, cut pizza, fake smile." Then it dawned on me. A "Eureka!" moment as it were.

"I've got it!" I bellowed a godly laugh and bounded to where we kept the little blue nametag plates and the darker blue letters to put on them. Shuffling through the drawer's contents I found what I needed and went to where I could be left to my ingenious creativity.

"Hmm... yes, splendid. A 'W.' An 'A'..."

I returned to work giddy with delight at my creation, wearing it proudly on my uniform, the lettering crooked.

And thus I was reborn as "Wage Slave."

Being the smartass I am and also loving to stir up controversy, I was actually looking forward to helping customers. But deep down I really didn't think they'd even notice the nametag, yet alone understand it.

I was wrong. Most every customer I served that day noticed it and loved it.

"Man, they let you wear that?"

"Uhh... probably not. I just made it today."

"Well, that's pretty funny, man."

"I guess so. I hope I don't get fired. Here's your change."

"Thanks. Good luck."

Good luck? And they sounded so sincere! I had found a way to connect with my customers other than our shared love of subaverage pizza, and this time it meant something. Some of them even tipped me.

I was making a statement with this nametag. This nametag was important. I was connecting with my customers and exposing the true system for all to see.



The people that came in and bought pizza that day may or may not have shared my grand illusions about the nametag. Most probably just got a kick from seeing something ironic in an environment of "professionalism."

But I knew that the one group of folks that wouldn't like it would be Management. With a capital "M." And it didn't take long for them to send down their wrath upon me like a swarm of vicious locusts.

K-Mart has a lot of managers, and most of them are good people, but there's always one that strikes fear and inspires loathing among all the employees. It was this manager that would carry out the punishment of Wage Slave. He's a tall guy with a military haircut and beady eyes. He looks as if he's incapable of smiling. In fact, he wouldn't look out of place in a Nazi uniform so let's call him der Furher (because libel and slander be damned!).

Der Furher strolled into the dark corner of Little Caesar's looking to buy a soda. Unfortunately, I was the only one working at the time and had to be the sacrificial lamb to serve him. I'm not by any means a religious man, but at the moment, I was praying to Saint Ronald, the patron saint of fast food workers, for protection.

The thought occurred to me that even Management can speak and act like the masses. They're not that scary. I almost laughed aloud.

But that urge was soon crushed. Der Furher's black, beady eyes had scanned me. Managers are trained to smell fear. He stopped ordering and glared.

*Shit! He knows! Where are the cyanide capsules?*

"What does that say on your nametag, young man?"

"Uhh... nametag? Oh, yes... well, this is just a, well..." I was grasping for an explanation.

"Wage Slave? Do you think that's funny?"

"Why else would I do it?" I looked at him like he was joking.

*Jesus Christ! Don't be a smart aleck!*

"What!?" der Furher grimaced as if he was in great pain.

"Huh? Well, yeah, it's funny. I suppose," I said and shrugged.

"Take it off! What is your real name? Is that your real name?" his voice was rising in pitch.

"No, it's Mike. But a wage slave is what I am."

He was turning red. I was getting bolder. After all, why shouldn't I be allowed to wear this?

"Hey, man. Umm, sir. My customers love this. They think it's funny. It establishes something to relate to and laugh about."

*That's right. Challenge him. Alienate him. Customers are watching.*

"Take it off!" he said in a sort of crazy half-scream.

"But I've made their Little Caesar's experience just that much better!" I said this thinking that that would convince him.

"That's not what you're here for. Take it off!" der Furher sputtered and with a violent twitching of his left eye, then right eye, and left eye again, he goose-stepped out of the restaurant.

I was left standing behind the counter discomfited. That's not what I'm here for? He threw me off with that one. I had him on the run (so I like to think) but now I was reduced to silence. He had won. I capitulated and took the nametag off.

I suppose it would be better to remain a wage slave than to have been fired for it. I need to pay for school so that one day, hopefully, I can escape the wage slave system. Thank God for long-term thinking.

Der Furher apparently forgot about me, the other managers ignored me, and not one customer said anything negative about it, so after a week of being yelled at, I put the Wage Slave nametag back on. I continued to wear it and still do even now. The Wage Slave is like a year old now. In fact, some of my regular customers know me only as Wage Slave.

But now I wear it mostly for fun. I don't really need it to make a statement anymore. If one were clever enough, they would notice that I have a cartoon dictator embroidered on my hat. I may get fired for the nametag I made, but they can't fire me for my uniform hat.

Pizza, Pizza, indeed.

*Be polite. Courteous. Kind. Smile. Be a good employee. Ignore this terrible piece of insubordination on your chest. It's not real. Deny everything. Name, rank, and serial number.*

"Hi! How can I help you, sir?" I said, not having any trouble mustering enthusiasm now.

"Uhh... hmmm, yeah. I would like... a... hmm..." der Furher mumbled and stroked his chin.

Photograph by Peter Collins

## a lonely writer

by Mike Jackman

I lock myself in room two twenty of the Hotel St. Michael, hoping like a kid at Christmas for the Muse to touch me and tell me what to write. I am drunk on strong Irish whiskey and there is no noise save for a hum.

All hotels and motels have this hum. So it's here I sit at age twenty and confuse the Muse with numb whiskey. The paper is blank with me hoping that I'm not a fraud who can't write; just some dumb kid disdained by the Muse.

I wish I knew the musical Muse, for I am barely able to hum and that's what I do when I can't write. Peering outside of room two twenty, I see no one and begin hoping to find a muse to share my whiskey

with but inspiration hates whiskey, though alcohol has been the best muse to some great writers; and I'm hoping inspiration will come in a hum, not alcoholism at twenty. And it is this thought that makes me write,

regardless that I'm too drunk to write because of the cheap Irish whiskey. Words flow until they number twenty. It is just me, twenty words, the Muse, and a bottle in a room that hums a song that I am really hoping

to remember the next day while hoping that I don't oversleep while I write, hypnotized by a low and slow hum, aided by the seductive whiskey, and ridiculed by that vixen Muse. She has given me only twenty

words with twenty blank pages hoping to be filled by a muse who will write prose in whiskey ink, dried by the hum.



Photograph by Katie Congrove

## the short good-bye

by Bernie Silver

I could hardly recognize him. The cancer had reduced his once large and robust frame to sagging skin draped on a rickety coat rack. It took what little resolve I was capable of not to avert my gaze, although I'm not sure he would have known if I had. His eyes were watery and unfocused and I think he had seen the last he would see of this world sometime after they had brought him home from the hospital to die in the same bed he had slept in for god knew how many years. My mother had left the stale, arid room so my father and his good-for-nothing son who never called or visited could be alone in their estrangement and utter what few words either could muster. I did the best I could, he said in a voice as frail as his body. I wondered how he was even aware of my presence, as I hadn't said a word to this point. I said I knew and I was sorry and I was about to acknowledge what a prick I'd been when he said never mind, it's over, done. You live, you die, and in-between you wonder what it was all about. I didn't argue, partly because we had done too much of that when he was in fighting shape and partly because he had caught me off guard: jaded as I was, I had never thought of life quite that cynically. He passed away the next day and during the flight back after the funeral I thought about his words and it occurred to me how ironic it was that with one of his few remaining breaths my father had finally said something I could agree with. Anyway, don't tell him I said so, but I miss him.

Ceramic by Pat Perz



Photograph by Tina Huyler

**"you live, you die,  
and in-between  
you wonder what  
it was all about."**

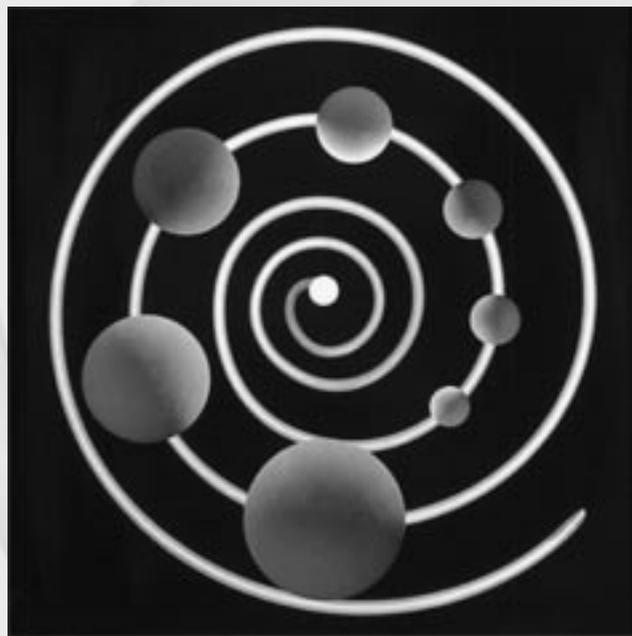
# ain't gonna cry no more, no more

by Bernie Silver

I slouch into Cal's Cafe feeling more like a cup of strychnine than caffeine. I walk over to the booth Joan and I used to sit in, as long ago as yesterday, and fortunately it's empty so I don't have to get gnarly with anyone. Choosing this booth is stupid, I know that, so you don't have to rub it in. But here's the thing: I may be feeling shitty over her leaving, but I'll be damned if I'll let her intimidate me or anything. This is the booth I usually sit in, and this is the one I'm going to park in today. In fact, I kind of sprawl out, you know, like I'm making a statement.

Anyway, I'll never understand women, not as long as I live, which will be for quite some time, seeing as how I'm still in college and all. But young as I am, I know I'll never solve the enigma. Not ever. In fact, I'm about ready to swear off the whole lot of 'em. See, it just ain't worth it. Yeah,

"Anyway,  
I'll never  
understand  
women, . . .  
In fact, I'm  
about ready  
to swear off  
the whole lot  
of 'em."



Digital Image by Jerry Carroll

I like to get laid as much as the next guy, but let's face it, the pleasure doesn't last as long as chewing gum and then you're left with whatever comes next, which is usually nothing to write home about. Unless you're satisfied with a one-nighter, which is kind of shallow if you ask me, and I'm just not a shallow kind of guy, quite frankly.

Maybe I should be a monk or something, you know? Just do without. Course I'd get horny sooner or later but they must let you jerk off at those monasteries, or the monks would rape everyone in sight.

But even aching cajones would be preferable to breaking up all the time, and getting that sick feeling in the pit of your stomach whenever it happens. You know what I mean? The pits, let me tell you, and no pun intended. But this time was the worst, which is why I'm ready to be a priest. You wouldn't believe it, how she gave me the quiet treatment. Usually when they leave they yell and scream and call me all sorts of names. But Joan wakes up this morning before I do, shakes me out of a wet dream and, without throwing a single plate or slamming even one door, says in a whisper I can barely hear, she just can't take it anymore and she's leaving. I ask what the hell's the matter? She says she's told me many times, so for the last time, goddamnit: You're emotionally unavailable.

Now tell me, what the fuck does that mean? C'mon, really. Women are always accusing me of that and I never know what they're talking about. If it's about hiding my feelings, hell, I put mine right out there. Especially with Joan. Whenever I was pissed because she was late, you know, taking her sweet-ass time dressing or hunting all over the goddamn apartment for her keys, didn't I tell her? Whenever I was madder than hell because she was nagging me about my so-called drinking problem, didn't I tell her? Whenever I was upset with her mother for opening her big mouth, didn't I tell her and the old bitch both? So what's with this emotionally unavailable shit? Women give the

words some kind of meaning that's not in the dictionary, I can tell you that. They just haul them out so they can beat up on you, and in my case they do it every day of my life. So you can see why I'm pondering going solo. Really. I think I will, in fact.

"Hey Sal, what's up? Cuppa jo as usual?"

Brenda has this killer smile, which right now I appreciate more than ever. She's in my mid-afternoon sociology class, and she waitresses mornings to get a little spending money, seeing as her old man's paying the inflated tuition at this dump. She told me all that one day when we were walking out after class. I don't know how we got into the conversation, but I always thought if I weren't with Joan I'd ask Brenda out just like that. She reminds me of Britney Spears, you know, without all the ass shaking and trashy outfits. Oh yeah, and she happens to be a friend of Joan's, so for sure I couldn't do anything when the bitch and I were together. Not that I would try anything now, seeing as I'm swearing off all of 'em, including the babes.

"Yeah, just a cup of coffee to keep me awake during English lit," I say. "Can you imagine them scheduling that sleeping pill at 9 fucking o'clock in the morning?"

"Sadists, that's what they are. Hey, where's Joan?"

"We broke up."

"No."

"Yeah, ain't that the shits?"

"That's too bad. I'm so sorry."

"Bad ain't the word for it. I feel like crap, you know?"

"I know. When Brad left me last year I almost blew my brains out."

"No kidding? Sometimes you wonder if it's worth it."

"If what is?"

"You know, relationships."

"Oh, I think they're worth it. You just have to find the right person."

"Is that right?"



Photograph by Beatriz Duran

"Well, it's what I think anyway. Listen, I've got a break coming up. You going to be here a while? You wanna have some coffee together?"

I say sure, why not. And don't give me that look. We're just having coffee, for chrissake. Besides, I didn't swear on a stack of Bibles or anything.

Now did I?

# aswan

by Audrey Pullen

In the land of spices  
saffron, cinnamon, clove and pepper  
A Nubian woman,  
Navigator, weaver of water  
Our Falluka sails wistfully.  
You teach us to dance on the river,  
indigo silk wrapped in ribbons of sunlight.  
The sky is a bleeding pumpkin.  
Air thick as honey, envelopes like a lover  
We are lotus-eaters  
We are cobras in trance  
We erupt luscious, like mellow saxophone  
you ride meteors  
through the omnivorous cointooth  
straight to the lightning fields!  
and in your temple carved by comets,  
a dove  
lingers  
She.....is a salve  
for the anguish and emptiness of the "great erasing"  
She.....is a sweet drop of cream in an ebony desert.



*Digital Image by Paul Van Tuyl*

# little soldier

by Nancy Burgeson

Waited thirty-one years to meet him,  
diminutive hands, withered skin with amber tone,  
ravenously hungry for food and life  
yet tardy by nearly one month.

Golden hair, warm brown eyes  
melted winter snow  
December day, he fought for life  
with rapid breath, and searing skin  
His little body weak and limp

Bone marrow hard as dry cement,  
A fifty-fifty chance at life, Chemotherapy starts on Monday.  
Adriamycin gnaws on flesh  
Tissue dies, the ankle scars  
Impossible to walk,  
fortitude continues.

Photograph by Peter Collins



Golden locks fell out in clumps  
A perfect head appeared  
Baseball caps worn with pride  
This soldier had nothing to conceal

Four a.m.—Prednisone kicks in  
I'm hungry, pizza please, and leg chicken if you have it!

White counts plummet  
Fever, neutropenia at the forefront  
The warrior never stops to query

Red counts drop, reload the ammunition.  
Needles, packed cells, Popsicles, and hugs  
Mom and Dad are growing weary

The little soldier marches on.



Watercolor by Lea Lagos

# fading petals

by Nancy Burgeson

You would adore Minnie.  
Despite eighty-nine birthday cakes, her eyes still glisten  
The world is illumined with her smile  
Yet disapproving glances dismember

Although years have diminished her sight,  
reading glass in hand, she  
terrorizes a crossword puzzle or savors  
Georgia O'Keeffe's *Cow Skulls with Calico Roses*

Waxy begonias, English ivy,  
yellow chrysanthemums smile on her world as  
purple iris maintain her dignity,  
Stubborn dandelions remind her of acceptance

Minnie is fading, slowly  
as the soft pink petal of a rose.



Ceramics by Jackie Maret

# ritual

by Danielle Johnson

It's best with the lights on,  
necklace tangled around my throat  
I'm not afraid to be seen

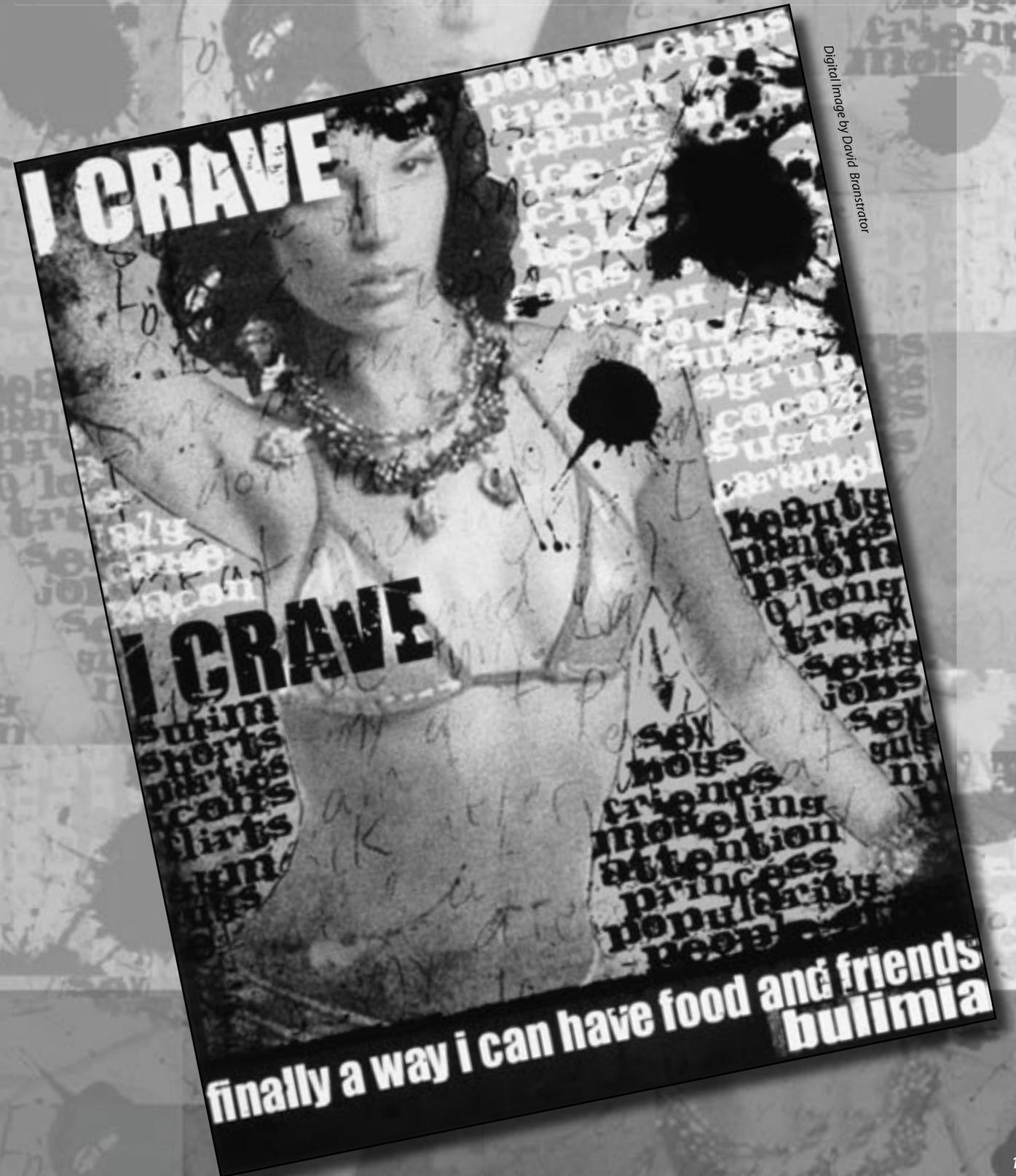
I read Anais Nin before bed just  
to turn you on  
my finger in the slit of the book marking  
place while we fuck

Cherry-ripe lower lip  
I can't keep my mouth closed,  
and you say I always look astonished

Our secret joke:  
I'm your literate whore  
and afterward I'll read excerpts  
to you in praise



Painting by R. Stephen Posey



Digital Image by David Branstator

# confessions of death and a spiritual journey

by Kevin Ryan

Until the age 21 years, I had not had any experience with death, always being shielded from it when I was growing up. I was living in Reno, Nevada, that year, in 1982. I had moved there the year before, from Maine. I had followed my best friend Randy, who had moved there one year previous to myself. One day I had a premonition that something was wrong with my family back home in Belfast, Maine. The premonition was compelling enough that I quit my job at a casino called The Nevada Club, and got on a train and headed home to Maine. My worst fear was that my grandmother, who we called "Nan," was going to die, at the age of 103. I had always been close to her when I was growing up. Fortunately, this turned out not to be the case; she went on to live to be 106 years old. While I was back there, the day before I left to go back to Reno, I had a long, heartfelt talk with my father, with whom I had always had a rocky and violent past. We were able to settle our differences and walk away with love, respect, and admiration for each other. The next day I left on my 5-day journey back to Reno with a new outlook on my father for the first time. When I got back to Reno, I was greeted with the news that my father had died 3 days after I had left Maine, and there would be no service or funeral, according to his request. He had known he was going to die of cancer for 6 months and told no one but my mother, who kept his secret the whole time. While I was there visiting, I wondered why, for the first time in my life, they seemed so close to each other. Since I had made my peace with him, and had no real experience with death, I packed up my

emotions about it and put them on a shelf in the back of my mind, where they still remain today. I have never cried or mourned for his death; I only chalked it up to fate or the way it was meant to be. I never again even gave a thought to what happens to us when we die.

My second experience with death, however, touched me profoundly. This happened in 1985 with my best friend Randy, who had influenced me to move to Reno. He had previously had some problems with lymphoma, and was now experiencing a grapefruit-sized swollen lymph node in his groin. He went for radiation treatment to reduce the swelling, but a couple of days after he had returned home, his appendix burst from the radiation. By the time his companion got him to the hospital, he had been dead for 10 minutes. They were able to resuscitate him and put him on life support where he remained for 32 days in a vegetative state. He was able to recover enough at this point to pull out his own life support tubes. He died again, and was dead for 3 minutes before they resuscitated him and put him back on life support.

During his stay in the hospital, the test for AIDS was first being used. In Randy's many blood tests, it was discovered

in Randy's medical care. Those who did take part in Randy's medical care came in well prepared with rubber gloves, masks, and gowns. When they left the room, they scrubbed up so as not to become infected. You can't blame them; the unknown is what we all fear the most. So, needless to say, a lot of his personal care was performed by Randy's companion Gary, his uncle Moe, his mother, and myself. Moe and I both worked as night auditors at the Fitzgerald Hotel-Casino. Randy also worked there until his illness. Moe and I would get off work at 8 a.m. and go stay with Randy until mid-afternoon. A few days after Randy's second resuscitation, as we were ending our visit with him, we were met by the hospital Chief of Staff, and the hospital chaplain. They asked Moe to come to their office. This is when they said to him, "something has to be done for Randy; he can not go on like this." We knew what they really meant.

After a long night of work and discussing what they meant, we went home, got dressed in our nicest clothes and went to visit Randy for the last time. We went into the room and told him how much we loved him. We told him

how we just wanted him to be comfortable. Moe asked me to leave the room. I did and waited outside in the hallway while Moe removed Randy's life support, and waited for him to die. We waited for someone to come and resuscitate him again. No one did, keeping the promise made in the office of the Chief of Staff the day before.

I could not put this away on a shelf in the back of my mind. This was here in front of me, and I had to confront all the feelings, the hurt, the loss, and the emptiness. When this event was coupled with the

revelation of my own HIV-positive status, I began to wonder about my own mortality. I began to wonder "where did he go, was he alright, was there a place beyond his physical body?" I cried and mourned for him for over a year. I just

wanted to know he was all right. One night, about a year later, I woke from a sound sleep, hearing Randy call my name. I sat up, looking straight into the eyes of an owl in a painting

Randy had painted for me before he died. I felt Randy's presence all around me. I could sense his smell filling my nostrils. I asked, "Randy is that you?" Then I could hear his voice. The sound was not coming from outside my head, but from somewhere deep within me. This is what he had to say; "Stop your crying, end your fears. There is no reason for the pain you feel." I realized at this point that I was burning up with fever and was sweating profusely. I asked him, "Are you okay?" He responded, "Stop your crying. I am all right.

There is no more hurting, there is no more pain." Then I felt the tears fall from my cheek and splash on my arm. He then said, "I come with a message for you. Put away your hurt and pain; enjoy the gift. You are there for one reason only. You are there to give love and receive love as much as you can. When you get where I am, love is automatic, unconditional, and given without choice. While you are there, it is a gift that is given or received by choice. So until I see you again, use the gift, share the gift, and pass the gift around." As quickly as he had awakened me, he was gone. I felt my heart grow three times my body size. I began to wail and sob, but it was not sorrow, hurt, or longing. This was joy and love and fulfillment. As I processed this surreal experience, I had to pinch myself to make sure I was not dreaming.

From that moment on, I have never looked at death the same way. I do not fear it; I do not question it any more. Since this experience, I have been with at least 30 people when they have died. I cry tears of sorrow that they are no longer here with me, but I feel a sort of joy that they are now released from their physical body and are now a part of the gift, the cosmos, the pure energy of love. As physics dictates, energy does not disappear; it only changes form. I have never been one to follow any organized religion, but this spirituality I acquired that night has always helped me to help others when they are ready to depart from this life. I call upon those loved ones who have passed. I refer to them as my angels. They help me, and guide me through this life, until one day when I will become part of the gift and join my angels.

"You are  
there  
to give love  
and receive  
love..."



Sculptures by Rex Ijams

that he was HIV-positive, although this had nothing to do with his illness. At this time, little was known about AIDS, and fear was running rampant, even in the medical community. Many medical personnel refused to take part

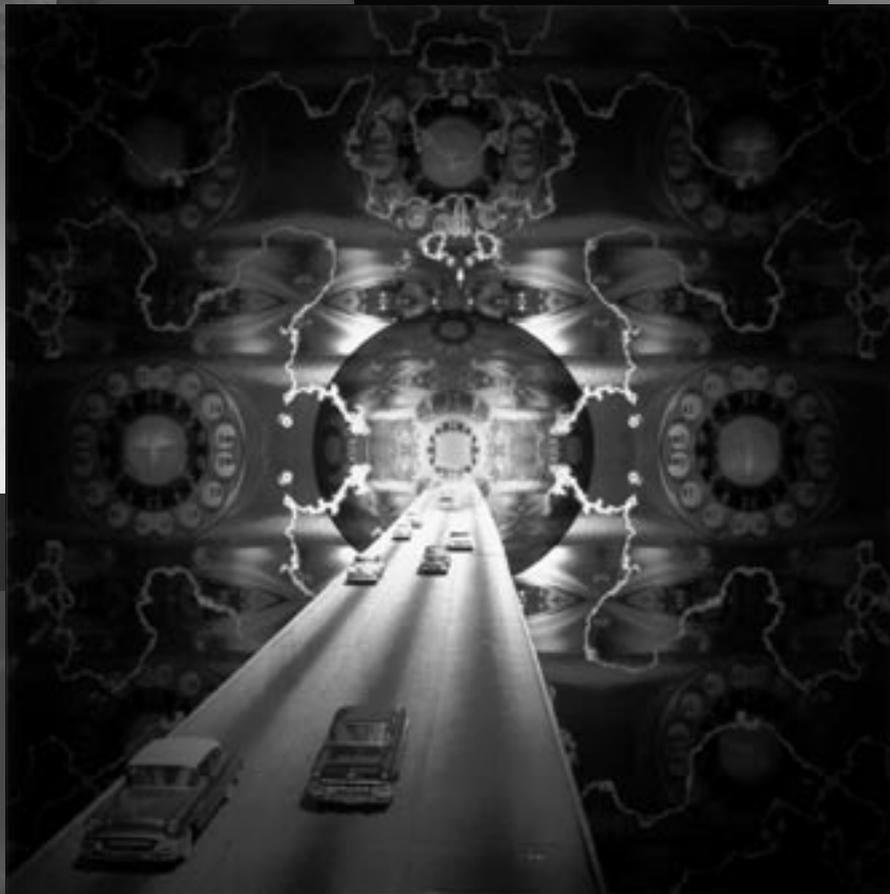


Jewelry by Santiago Galvis

Sculpture by Kenn Roberts



Sculpture by Matt Ely



Digital Image by Jeff Lowry



Jewelry by Venetia Young

# between heartbeats

by Richard Sidy

Heartbeats reflecting universes like soap-bubbles, stretching time then bursting, dropping their worlds damply into my cocoon.

Blooming sunlight through the dappled shadows of leaves,  
quail calls competing like plaintive cats' meows  
heavy with the scent of skunks, tasting like burnt coffee.  
Morning breath of soft salty skin lingering like jasmine  
then scurrying out of the light  
as the housewife with her can of Raid curses cockroaches.

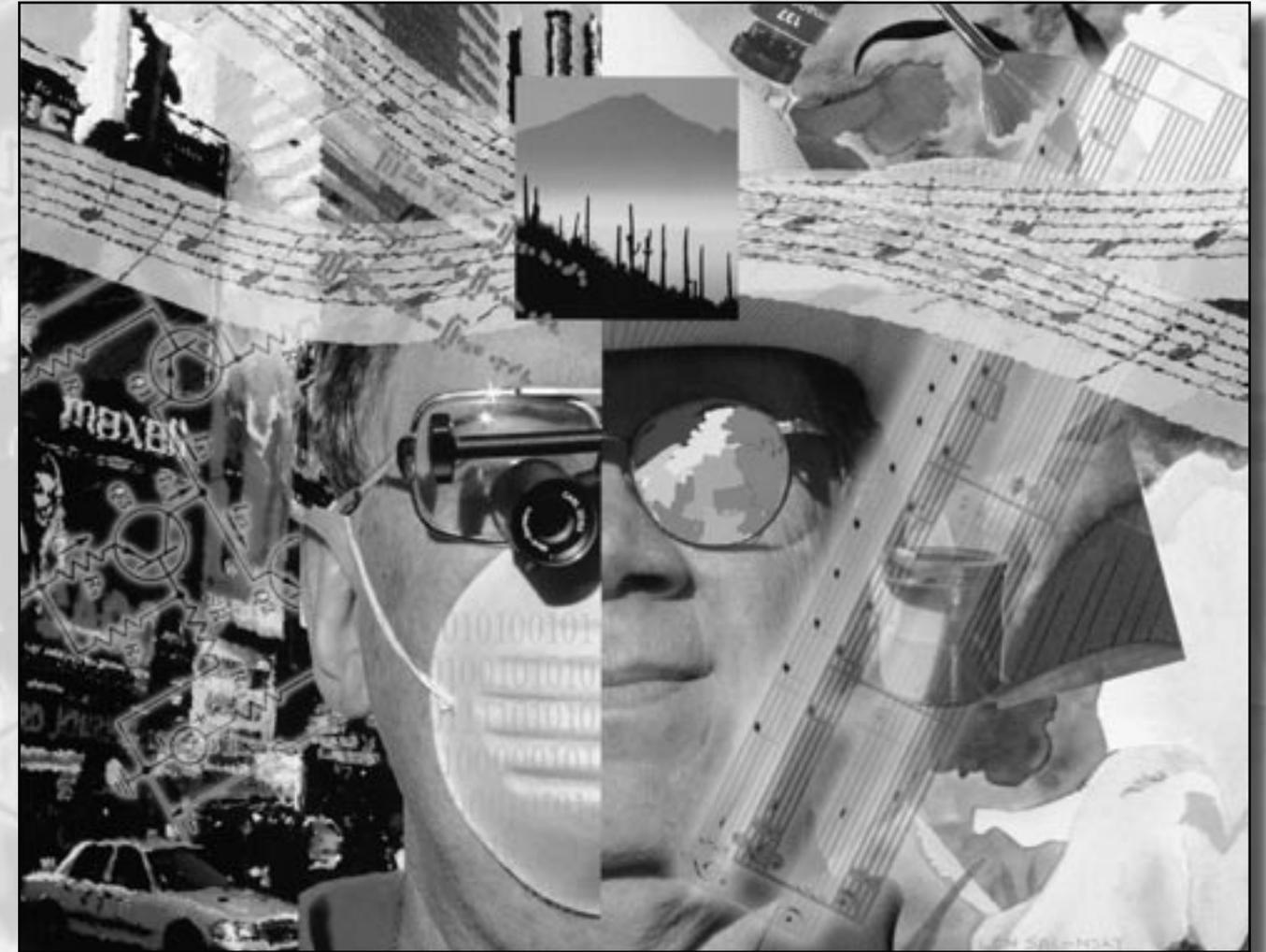
Scott Simon, Susan Stamberg: it must be Saturday.  
Could sleep longer, but poetry  
and heat-parched plants are shaking me  
softly like a lullaby.  
Her caress, suspended, poised to crash,  
breaks upon his shrouded shore,  
pulling Monsieur S  
into the welcome abyss,  
a turbulent tide which he cannot resist  
as he strips the barnacles off the pilings  
holding up Monday through Friday  
when he will again follow the winding road  
to Flagstaff at this hour.

Don Téó says, "Yo enseño en la cárcel."  
"At least I have a captive audience," he jokes,  
but he is not joking, ex-Peace Corps in County Detention.  
We use language to pry young minds open  
in the third-world country of adolescence  
each day as we try to start a revolution.

But today is Saturday,  
and I can drift between heartbeats.



Ceramic by Tom Alward



Digital Image by Len Salonsky

# untitled

by Kathryn LaTorre

Grandpa was an illegal immigrant. It was 1910 and he was fifteen years of age. A sailor he had bribed to stow him away in Marseilles carried him onto New York harbor and thus, American soil, in a potato sack. He gained his citizenship by serving in the muddy trenches of France. He was a plumber, a shoe repairman, a custom boot maker, a charter member of the American Legion, a card shark, a great bowler, an enterprising gardener, and best of all, a Grandfather. Domenico LaTorre, Dom, Dan, Danny. He was a son, a husband, a father and a man among men.

Grandpa and I fell in love at first sight. His only son Richard took me home with him for a Sunday dinner on a wintry day during my first year in college. Mama wasn't too crazy about me, but Papa, as I knew him then, thought I might do, and for the next thirty years we loved and trusted each other.

Papa became Grandpa when our children were born and Grandpa he remained. Eventually everyone we knew called him Grandpa. It was the role he was born for.

Grandpa spoke with only a slight accent. He appeared much taller than the five-foot, five inches that was printed on his driver's license. Sometimes he looked like Santa Claus and sometimes he looked like a patrician grandee. His thinking could be profound and his political predictions were stunningly accurate, but he was always pragmatic. Let me give you an example.

Grandpa was a charter member of American Legion Post 21 in Schenectady, New York. He attended monthly meetings for years and years, did a little rabble rousing, held a few offices and helped to keep the bar and card room open. One year in the early 1970's, the Post decided to try something different in the way of raising funds and after a raucous meeting with a few unseemly suggestions, they fastened on a chicken barbecue. They had space near the parking lot for a barbecue pit and they were sure they could pull it off. They enlisted the help of the Auxiliary, a Sunday afternoon was chosen, and the deal was done.

Everything went very well. The chickens were ordered at a very reasonable price, a local lumberyard donated framing and wire to make the grilling frame and the ladies agreed to make the salads and serve. On the Friday and Saturday nights before the designated date, Grandpa helped peel potatoes and roll napkins and silver.

Sunday promised to be a beautiful summer day and Grandpa left the house early. The tables were set up, the coals were lit and everyone was pleased with the preparations. Around eleven in the morning, about two hours before the first chicken

was to be cooked to perfection, one of the Auxiliary ladies, an old friend of Grandpa's, ventured that the tables looked great but regretted that they had forgotten the flowers. They only wanted little arrangements for each table, but it was too late. All the florists were closed on Sundays.

Grandpa volunteered to do what he could. Everyone knew that "Dan" loved flowers and always had a remarkable garden, so they weren't surprised that he might have a source, even on a Sunday. He soon returned with a huge supply of fresh cut flowers of every variety. It was a bonanza. The Auxiliary was delighted and arranged them on every table.

When Richard went into Schenectady in the late afternoon to pick up the family's takeout barbecue and to drive his father home, Grandpa had the covered plates ready in a large box and he tried to hustle his son out of the parking lot, saying, "Come on, come on, Richard. Let's go."

But some Legion members followed Grandpa to the car and insisted on telling Richard how "Dan" had saved the day and had come up with all the flowers. They changed the whole atmosphere and added so much to the event. Also, "Dan" donated all the flowers. He wouldn't take any money for them.

Grandpa said again, "Let's go, let's go," and they started home.

"So, Dad, where did you get the flowers?"

"It's not important. Let's go home."

Richard persevered. "Dad, where did you get the flowers?"

Grandpa squirmed a little and finally muttered, "St. John's."

"St. John's. The church?"

"No."

"Dad! St. John's cemetery? You didn't!"

Grandpa shrugged. "There were all these flowers. I only took a few from each grave. You couldn't tell; I was careful. Besides, they weren't using them." And to his practical mind, the clincher, "Do you think they care?"



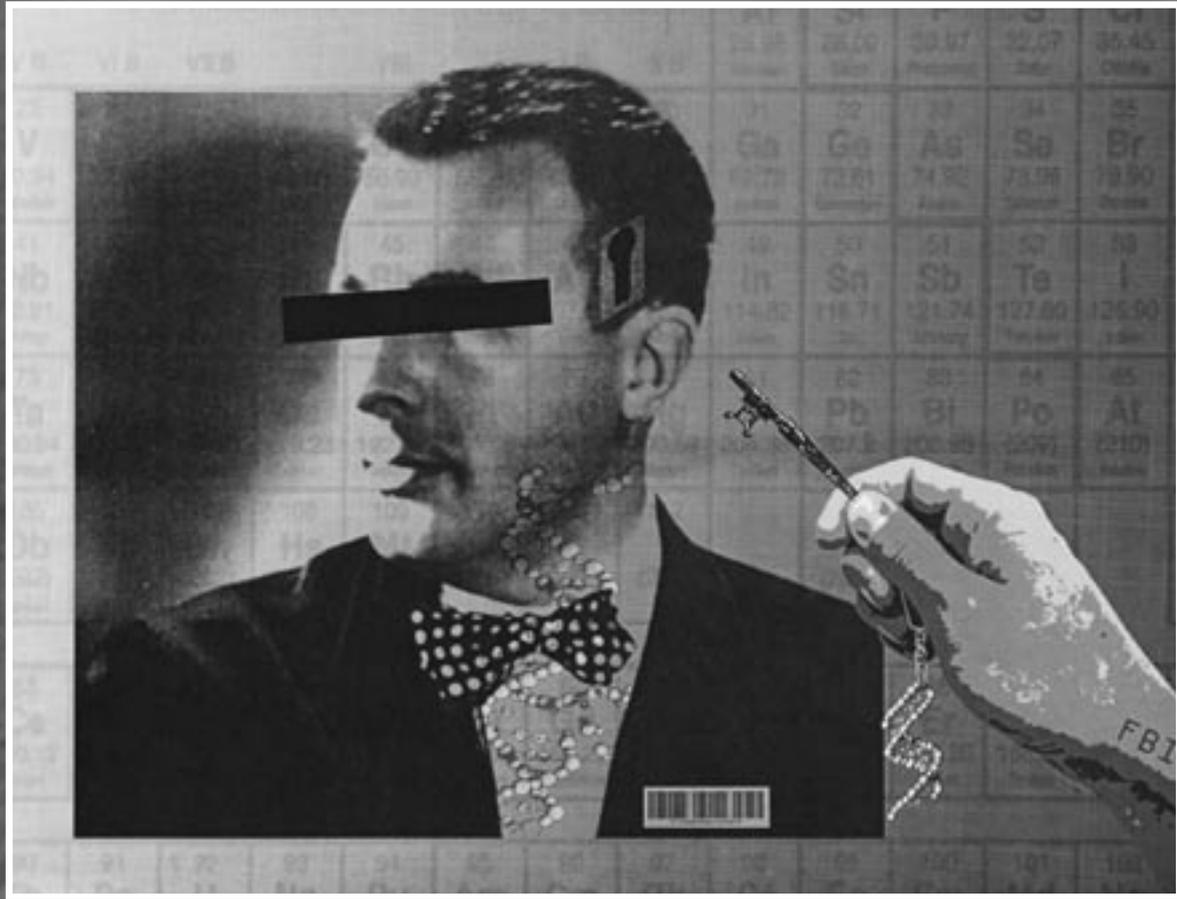
Painting by Seth Weber

"Eventually everyone we knew called him Grandpa. It was the role he was born for."

Jewelry by Barbara Bogden



Illustration by Matt Ely



# messages

by Karolina Walsh

Honesty has carved  
Her arms and legs—  
“Don’t believe your own hype”  
her torso—  
“Never say love don’t exist”  
her back—  
“Some day I will become the person I am  
pretending to be”

I have consulted the Primary Director of Energy  
on these matters of opinion  
only to be given a card that says—  
“Drink lots of water in the sun”  
which baffled and befuddled my brain  
to the door of Gravity  
who calmed my nerves  
with a token of serenity, spit shined to a glow

And all it said is that—  
“It’s O.K. not to know.”



Sculpture by Jim Frost



Drawing by R. Stephen Posey

"They were as a pack of deadly hyena, laughing and drooling....."

by Curtis Kleinman

It was a brutally hot December day. The streets of Argentina reeked of 105% humidity and you felt that number ever heavier upon you with each step. It was impossible for me to tell if I was wet from simply the vaporous air or from my own sweat. It didn't much matter, because I hadn't been dry since taking my shower at 6:00 a.m. that morning. For the last couple weeks I hadn't even bothered taking my towel into the bathroom, for it was no match for the choking humidity. As we entered the Disco Supermarket, we praised the noble inventor of the central cooling system and plunged ourselves into the weekly task of grocery shopping. We could be seen there every Wednesday doing the same thing, buying anything from cookies to Colgate. Something was very different this time though, and I think all four of us felt it. There was something in the air and it wasn't just the water vapor. It was a kind of palpable adrenalin. I knew something was up. To my right a woman frantically grabbed orange after orange off the shelf as if someone was behind her trying to steal them all away. Another man zinged past me with a whole cart filled with every kind of wine you can imagine. Others corralled armfuls of bread, and plowed their way to the checkout stand. Mothers half ran half dragged their little children up and down the aisles flopping in the essentials like rice, noodles, and canned goods by the armload. We gathered quickly that something was about to happen and this may be our last chance to buy food for some time. We spread out and started our own frenzied attack on the Disco. Even the employees seemed terrified of something. They obviously had been ordered to downplay their nervousness but it showed through them like a reeling man trying to hide his drunkenness. They forced fleeting smiles and clumsily went on working, but they kept peering nervously out the windows and whispering amongst themselves. I overheard two saying, "No podran entrar aca, no?" (They won't be able to come in here, will they?). I thrust the few things I had gathered onto the conveyor belt and told the checker to hurry. She didn't seem to hear me. Her hands rapidly rung up my groceries but the rest of her

was completely enveloped in her view of the sliding glass front doors of the store. My three companions were fixed on the same scenery and soon they started shouting at me to hurry. I bagged my own things, for the checker had completely abandoned her post and had shifted hastily to the back of the store where she huddled by a security guard wearing a bullet proof vest.

That was it. I was furious. I wanted to know what was happening. I saw another security guard stacking grocery carts against a glass wall of the store as if he were making a barricade or something. "Hey what's going on?" I demanded. He ignored me, until I insisted again and he said, "Stay away from the windows." I could see from the distance that my companions were leaving without me so I lengthened my stride to intercept them as they left the store, out the



Sculpture by Deborah Volk



Weaving by Adrienne Sharp

ominous sliding glass windows. They kept looking back at me and waving me on with their hands. They looked panicky, one of my friends looked as if he were on the verge of tears. Suddenly I saw why. My blood frosted over. My mouth flung open and turned desert dry. That was the first time in my life that fear became a taste. On the opposite corner, just adjacent to the store, a mob was forming! They were dirty people, without shirts or shoes, and it looked like, not long prior, they had been playing in the mud. Women and men alike sported long hair, and all had one thing in common; empty plastic sacks in hand. The Argentines called them "villeros," or in other words, the people who lived in the slums and on the streets. As I observed them, I couldn't help but notice their animal like behavior. They were as a pack of deadly hyena, laughing and drooling as they prepared to pounce on their defenseless prey. Beads of drool really did seem to glisten from their gapping mouths in that summer sun as they surveyed their target, adding even more to their wild kingdom aura. They had a mixture of anger, hatred and hunger in their eyes. All those hungry eyes were fixed on the Disco Supermarket. They were about to riot and loot the store. I looked down at my hands. My arms were full of groceries. It was then that my mind began betraying me. 'What will they do to us, kill us, beat us severely, at the very least rob us?' I saw no escape. What would these dirt poor Argentine savages do to us prim and proper North American missionaries? We were dressed in our proselyting

clothes with slacks, white shirts and ties. We were walking representatives of everything these people hated.

As we bolted through the door and out into the parking lot, I couldn't help but cowardly hope that they wouldn't kill me, and they'd be satisfied with one of my colleagues as an offering. We surveyed the parking lot. There was no exit. The lot was walled in on three sides, the opening being occupied by the mob. All four of us yelled some un-missionary like things in despair, searching for a way out. I ran as fast as I could toward the far wall determined to scale its twelve foot face and fall to freedom on the other side. Sheer terror and panic dragged me forward. As I approached the wall, it seemed to grow more and more Everest-like. I frantically scanned about me looking for another way. Suddenly I was alone. Had the mob gotten them? They were gone... I heard them yelling to me and a white car approached. The door swung open and before I knew it, they jerked me inside.

It was over! We were safe! The car drove through the middle of the crowd and out onto the open street. Our driver was a member of our church who had just happened to go shopping at the time of the riot. He let us out in front of our apartment and graciously accepted four boxes of milk for the ride to feed his newborn baby, for whom he was going shopping, before he saw the riot. That night we all spent a couple extra minutes on our knees, thanking God for the protection he sent us, his humble servants, that day.

# SUNDAY

by Tafline Laylin



Photograph by Eileen Tansey

Holy sweet Jesus we sounded good. Every Saturday night we'd get together and practice our notes while mama had tea and biscuits in the dining hall with the other ladies, and then on Sunday morning we'd put on our green and gold silk gowns and people would come from all over the country to the mountains just to hear us sing. It was more spiritual than God. I'm telling you the truth. Our voices carried through the Church, past those stained windows, and rolled right down to the valley. We were famous. We went on TV one time, yep, the whole country could hear us if they wanted, but only on Sundays. It sure made me nervous to be on TV like that because the sopranos, the baritones, all of us, we had our own unique sound. One slip fell to the ground like a sack of potatoes.

"Our voices carried through the Church, past those stained windows, and rolled right down to the valley."

My ma got me started when I was four years old, before my balls got too big. See, she really liked to sing but her voice scratched in every direction, so she played the piano instead. My grandpa bought her a used Baldwin for her wedding day. He didn't like my pa much, no one really did; he was gruff and rough from Arkansas and didn't have an ear for no music. But there was something about him and my mama. When her long fingers floated across those keys, he'd just sit back with his pipe, and rock himself into some strange kinda calm. No one else saw my pa like that. He died of stomach cancer from all that whiskey he drank. I guess. That's what my mama told me. Everyone else in the whole Shenandoah thought he died from being so damn bitter all the time. He never went to Church, just me and my mama, every Sunday. That was the only day I'd wake up with the hens and brush my teeth so they'd be nice and bright when I sang, and I'd comb my hair and shine my shoes blacker than sin.

After pa died, Ma started singing again—I didn't care what she sounded like. She'd play Amazing Grace and I'd sit in her lap, softer than any cushion you ever sat on, and we'd just laugh and fool around until way past my bed time. Anyway, I decided the day that drunk son-of-a-bitch Watson killed my mama to teach God my own lesson. I got my hands on every dirty magazine I could find and even kissed a boy one

time. I quit singin' and wanted to be James Dean. Well, that lasted about a week until my mama's service at First Southern Baptist Church. My grandpa grabbed me by the collar and dragged my sorry ass down and when that Amazing Grace came on, mama came right down from heaven into my mouth and I sang better than I ever did before.



Digital Image by Carolyn Dunn

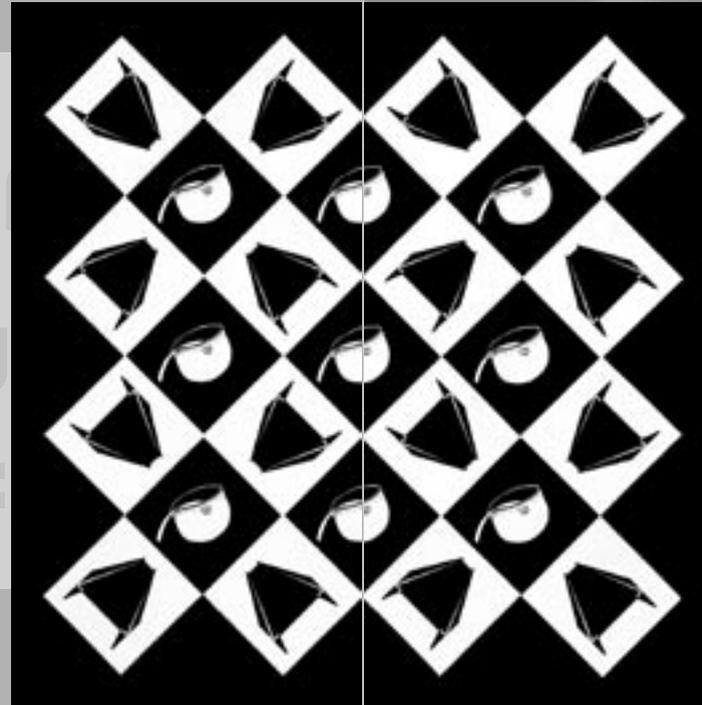
# september 11, 2001

by Frances Booth

Beloved wounded country,  
Numb with shock and disbelief,  
Enfold your rage in courage,  
Mourn a universal grief,  
For the evil that engulfs us  
Enshrouds a dying world  
Where human rights do not exist  
And freedom's flag is furled.  
To learn a hard-earned lesson,  
We've only just begun:  
That peace will be for everyone,  
Or peace will be for none.



Sculpture by Mary Hirschberg



Design by Ross Andrews



Photograph by Stacey Bogart

# october

by Danielle Johnson

Crackling in the distance like so many leaves underfoot,  
I long afor you, October, with your cold  
snap and your brown gutters. You held  
my woman's heart between twig fingers and had no care  
while I busied myself with swallowing the orange moon  
hoping to keep the secret of you in my belly

# booker t. lofton jr., pfc: a veterans day tribute



Monoprint by Mac Dodson

by Jay Tschirner

Dear Booker,

Today is Veterans Day. It has been almost 35 years. Do you remember the day the music died for Alpha's CP? It was a Wednesday. And when I think of you I smile, hear the elephants from "Magic Carpet Ride", and I remember our pact about passing a bowl if one of us were ever hurt and how you and Doc Ray tried to get me high on the litter before I got dusted off to the First Field Hospital.

I wish we could have become Vung Tau lifeguards as we had planned, sitting out the war at a beachside in-country R&R center. You will probably remember that after the Army, we said we were going to open a Mobil station in San Luis Obispo, where we could surf, repair dune buggies and desert bikes and maybe even sell a little gas.

I remember our LP's when only one of us had to be outside the perimeter, but we always went together. We were sentinels and brothers: Listening, but not understanding. We celebrated my twenty-first birthday, with a firefight that night, just four days before you died at age 19. That was the last time I saw you and you were laughing.

Mercifully, I did not hear your radio transmissions the day you died but I heard some gruesome accounts of the battle. Alpha had 18 KIA and 36 WIA and we also lost some slicks (UH-1 helicopters) and their crews. There was no react force to help you that afternoon, like this is NEWS to you! The next day they found no dead NVA but worked out that some REMF plotted the

wrong LZ and you landed inside an "L" shaped ambush of heavily reinforced positions instead of behind them. It was probably an oversized platoon of regular NVA with at least one anti-aircraft 51 caliber plus half a dozen RPG-7's and B-40's. They did not even scavenge up our weapons, except maybe a missing M-60, and they cut the handsets off all the PRC-25 radios.

Once, in Austin, I gazed at your father's name, Booker T. Lofton, Sr., listed in the telephone directory. I regret that I did not call him. I feel sympathetic toward your family's loss and wish I could console them. Now that I have the courage to call, your dad is not listed anymore. Has he moved or died? I don't know.

After you died, I did not want to be a lifeguard anymore. I got home ok on January 18, 1969. After bumming around until 1972, I settled into a comfortable and successful career in the radio broadcasting business working in New York and Dallas. In 1989, I quit my job and moved to Colorado to become a ski instructor.

On March 29, 1973, the last U.S. ground forces departed Vietnam with very little ceremony. 25 months later, April 30, 1975, South Vietnam surrendered. The 7th PLA, remember those people, were part of the force occupying Saigon (renamed Ho Chi Minh City). It is reasonable to believe that some of the same enemy soldiers we fought ended up drinking in the same Tu Do bars, getting hustled by the same bar girls! There are stories about the drugs, drinking and prostitution eventually corrupting the Communists, too. Capitalism is having the last laugh.

In 1992, and again in 1994, I ran my fingers across your name engraved on a monolithic black wall that is called the "Vietnam Veterans Memorial" or, "The Wall". Sacred to many, meaningless to some, it stands in a public park across the street from Lincoln's Memorial in Washington, D.C. It took until 1982 to get it built, and then with private donations. It probably wouldn't exist if not for the efforts of a fellow grunt, Jan Scruggs, and his reaction (he couldn't remember the faces of his fallen comrades) to a popular Vietnam War movie called "Deer Hunter" that he watched in 1979. You and seventeen others from Alpha Company are listed on two granite slabs (W37 and W38) in alphabetical order along with everyone else killed or reported missing in Vietnam on

November 27, 1968. It is appropriate that, as in death, you, Lt. Parr and Doc Ray are only inches apart. One hundred and forty panels list those killed or missing on each day of the acknowledged U.S. involvement in the war, alphabetically for that day. Your names are among the names of more than 58,000 killed or missing in action. Many preceded you and many followed.

Two years ago, I went snow skiing from a Bell 206 helicopter (the civilian version of our "Huey" UH-1) in the Selkirk Mountains of British Columbia. "Up, Up and Away" played through my mind every time we lifted off and I could feel your physical presence as though you were again sitting beside me. I don't listen to Steppenwolf on purpose, but it still gets radio airplay and I can vividly visualize the grin on your face when those elephants started trumpeting.

In a Veterans Affairs treatment center, they asked me to write a "grief" letter to say "good bye", but I did not choose to do that. Your smile and your spirit will always live with me. I think of you every day and especially during my most cherished experiences, (for example when John, my son, was born).

I really miss you and I am struggling to "Keep Up the Fire." In therapy, I learned to feel a little better about the Vietnam Experience. I have heard that Vietnam Veterans have the highest suicide rate in the history of returning U.S. combat soldiers.

You are still my best friend and I am thankful for the eight months that we spent together. I am working on letting go of my sorrow but I am not letting go of you. I hope you are with God but wherever you are, I pray that I will end up there, too. When my dog, Mo Fat Chi, died in 1988, I prayed that he could join up with you and that one day we will all be together again (wherever they send dead Vietnam Vets and their pets).

May God bless you always. I pray that you rest in peace. Thank you for being my friend. Keep your powder dry.

Your brother in combat,

Jay

Tuesday, November 11, 2003.

# georgia o'keeffe

by Annette Star Lustgarten

Adobe walls, black doors were her vision.  
Blinding light came through as she explored  
color, dazzling eyes in its explosion.  
Her grasp of desert buttes endures.

Skull bones and huge flowers stare out.  
Stark, bright New Mexico helped her see.  
Her mentor connection gave her art clout.  
She recorded Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu.

Georgia did not stop creating as she aged  
even blind she sculpted tall white figures.  
Through her ninety-eighth year she engaged  
in her bright studio with her pictures.

Pleased to be an enduring artist  
living a life in which art gave her bliss.



Sculpture by Barbara Andress



Jewelry by Hai Yan Sui



Photograph by Ryan McIntosh

by Bobbie Root

The spring wind roars  
Up the draw  
Swirls and gusts  
And wreaks havoc  
With my hair.

I hide inside.  
It stalks me  
Under the door  
Through the vents  
Like a vampire.

It finds me crouched in a corner  
Sucks me dry  
And does not leave me enough  
Strength to crawl.

I pray for a gentler breeze  
To tickle my wind chime,  
Beautiful music to heal  
My troubled soul.

the wind chime



Sculpture by Carrie March

## jesus of salt lake

by Joshua Vliet

He has been walking for hours, just walking, drudging through the pallid deserts of Salt Lake dragging his limp legs and swaying his limp arms like an old, hand-me-down rag-doll come to life.

His eyes are painted marbles, vacant and still, not blinking, just walking and thinking.

He is thinking for the sake of thinking and walking for the sake of walking.

His legs are flaccid. His brain is bleached. Yet, still he grinds through the endless ocean of Salt Lake, hoping that soon he will stumble onto life and dotingly cradle it in his arms.

His fingers swell as blood rushes down his arms, as does his tender mind while thinking of such ineffable abstracts as "life."

Maybe this is all that life is: walking, existing, burning these images of Salt Lake in his mind, as if trying to amass stills

for the portfolio of his mortality, still anxiously waiting for life with open arms. "What if this were Israel instead of Salt Lake? Would they call me divine?" he began thinking. What spoils will come from all this walking? Is this the beginning or the end of his life?

How can there be an end to such a thing as life?

"No pine box could ever keep me still," he chuckles as he continues his walking, paying no mind to the maggots on his arms." As vultures circle his head, he begins thinking of what a fine Purgatory Salt Lake

would be. "This brimstone, this cloud, this 'Salt Lake' would truly be a fine fork in my life," he thought, putting an end to such arduous thinking. His bones crack and his heart grows cold and still, despite the unforgiving sun that bronzes his arms. His body is dead, yet his legs keep walking.

Like a tiny bruise on the flesh of Salt Lake, he wanders through the desert; this is his life, never dying, never living, just walking and thinking.

"...he chuckles as he continues his walking, paying no mind to the maggots on his arms."



Sculpture by Joseph Watt

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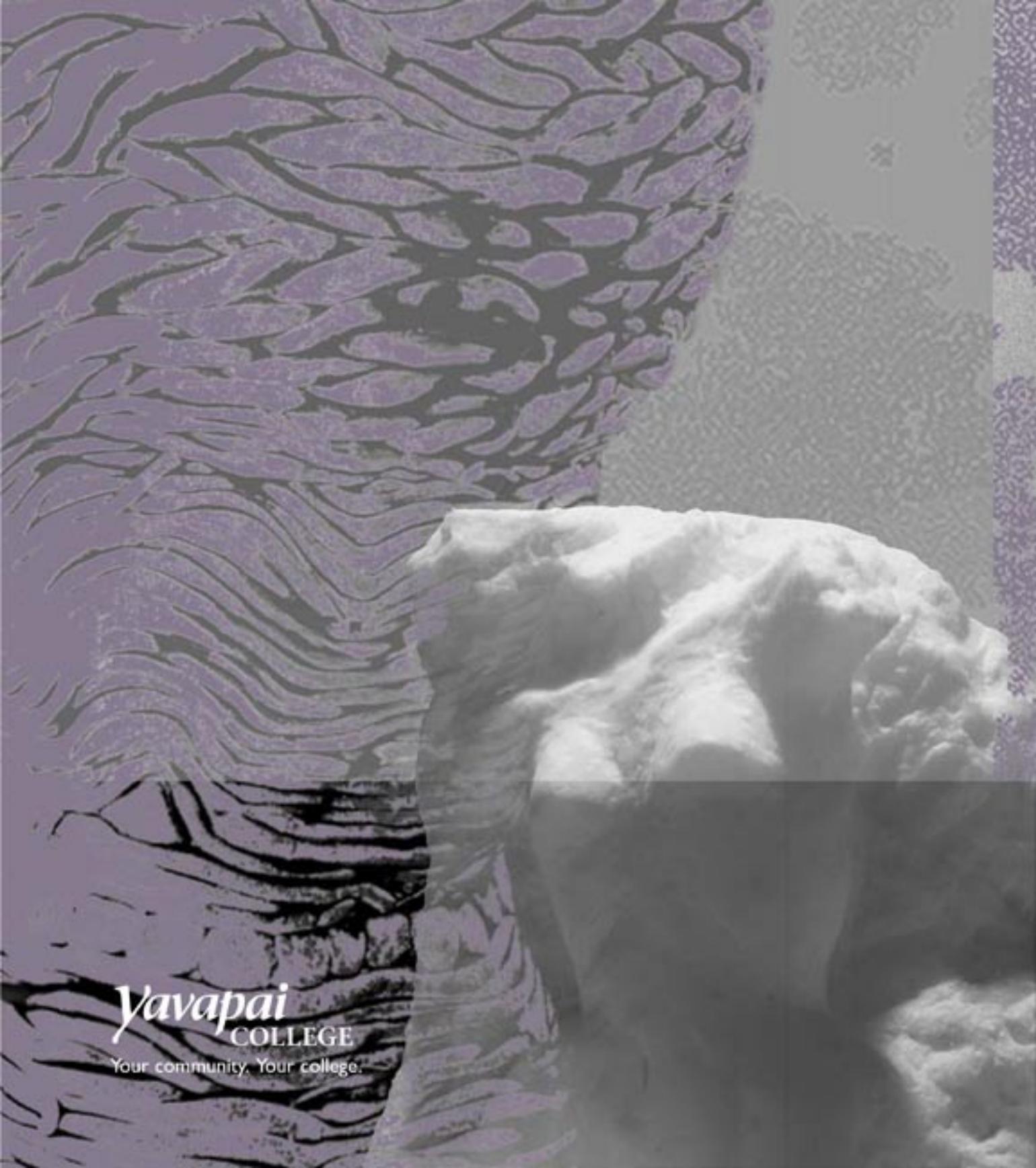
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