



# ***VOICES 2011***

**MCHENRY COUNTY COLLEGE  
LITERARY / ARTS JOURNAL**

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## **BEST OF MAGAZINE**

**VOICES 2010** is proud to announce  
Awards for the Best of Magazine

### **LITERARY:**

Jerome Wendt  
*Rebirthing Cynthia*

### **VISUAL ART:**

Colleen Granworth  
*In the Boiler Room*

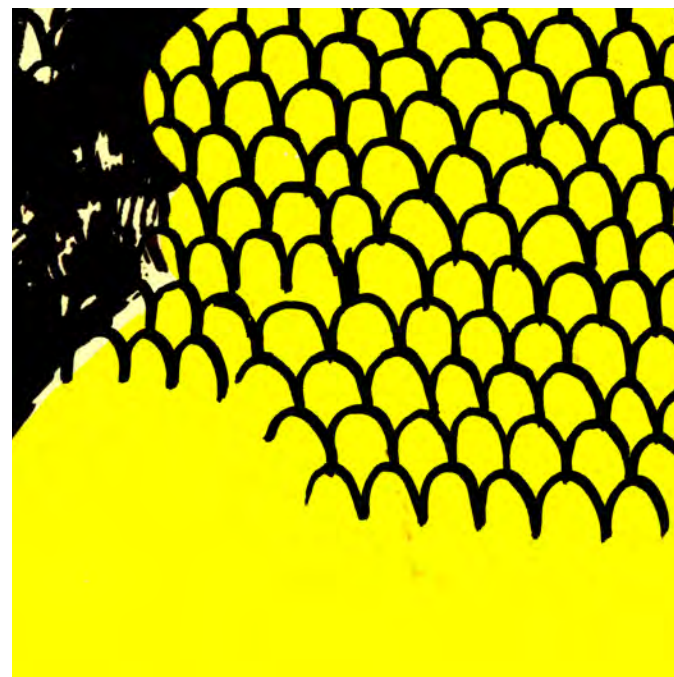
### **MUSIC:**

Zach Cannella  
*Blessing*

### **FILM & VIDEO:**

Lucas Goins  
*Spectrum Song*

Voices wishes to acknowledge  
students for their excellence in  
literature, music and visual arts.



## **VOICES 2011 McHENRY COUNTY COLLEGE LITERARY / ARTS JOURNAL**

Voices 2011 is produced by McHenry County College to recognize and showcase the visual arts, musical, and literary talents of McHenry County College students.

The ideas and the opinions expressed in Voices 2011 are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the attitude of the Board of Trustees, the administration, the faculty, or the staff of McHenry County College. Materials for Voices 2011 were submitted by students who have been enrolled in courses at McHenry County College during one or all of the previous three semesters. The pieces selected for inclusion in Voices 2011 were based on the student editors' opinion of their aesthetic merit. It is the policy of McHenry County College not to discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, religion, national origin, or handicapped status in its educational programs, as required by Federal regulations. Inquiries regarding compliance may be directed to Angelina Castillo, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources.

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## VISUAL ART



**GABI SPARACIO**  
*Earthly Dragon*  
 ceramics  
 11" x 7" x 2"

**VOICES 2011**

# LOOK THERE'S BLACK HAWK

Look! There's Black Hawk!  
my dad said, as we sped  
along Illinois Highway 2 in our Hudson.  
My sister and I raised little-girl eyes  
from our Marvel comic books  
and glanced across the Rock River  
at a white statue far away.

Today, sitting in the shade  
of a towering tribute to Black Hawk,  
I turn my eyes from bored visitors  
who view one more statue  
on one more Columbus Day weekend.

*I fought hard,  
Black Hawk said,  
but your guns were well aimed.*

I want to tell irreverent visitors,  
*You disturb sacred places.  
Study his eye—the most carefully modeled part—  
the eye of Black Hawk, chief of the Sauk and Fox,  
whose melancholy eye looks forever  
over the river valley he once roamed.*

Now, grayhaired,  
I look up from my notepad  
at 48 feet of concrete,  
honoring a conquered chief.  
I look out over the Rock River,  
alive 240 feet below.  
I look back.

“Look, dad,” I whisper. “There’s Black Hawk.”

## LITERATURE

JAN BOSMAN

*Look There's Black Hawk*  
poetry





## ***VISUAL ART***



**KELSEY DAVENPORT**

*Untitled*  
photography  
10" x 8"

***VOICES 2011***

# THE SWEATER

There wasn't anything unique about that day. No hurricanes happening. No terrible floods. No wars, no famines. It was like any other early October day, in any other year. The sky was pale blue with just a hint of Indian Summer in the air. People hurried along the street in their cars and busses, on their feet, going somewhere in their usual hurries.

Standing outside I took the final drag from my mooched cigarette, watching as the end of the cigarette glowed brighter from the deep pull of my breath. Flicking the cigarette to the pavement, I crushed it out with the toe of my dirty sneaker. I had really needed that smoke. The aroma of it had driven me insane with want and need. Craving it like a dying man's last breath. "Once a smoker, always a smoker," my dad had once told me.

I had been given a short reprieve to sneak out of the waiting room to savor this much-needed cigarette. Even ex-smokers needed one during times of stress, and the last week definitely had been stressful. But there was no more avoiding. No more bargaining or wasting time. It was time to meet with the doctor. The jury had deliberated and the verdict was about to be read.

The ride in the elevator was a silent one I shared with my cousin Mike. I could see our reflection in the stainless steel doors of the elevator. Distorted among the smeared fingerprints and smudges of dirt, our faces wrought with tension, our lips pursed, fine lines etched around our eyes. Without fanfare, we walked the corridor of the third

floor, listening to the beeps of the patients' monitors, the doctors' names being paged over the intercom, the squeak of our shoes against the tile floor.

All eyes turned toward us as we entered the room, taking the seats farthest from my mother, who was flanked on either side by my siblings. I watched the scene unfold as if I were an outsider looking in. I could hear the doctor's voice as if I were in a fog. "Terminal. Brain dead. Morphine." I watched in slow motion as my family struggled with their tears, their fingers intertwined with each others as their knuckles whitened in their grips, their noses turning red as they keened.

I sat frozen in my chair, unable to breathe, to move, to feel, until another of my cousins grabbed me by my shirt, yanking me straight out of my chair and shoving me. "Comfort your mother," he yelled. His remark reverberated in my mind; my eyes swam with tears as my heart thumped painfully in my chest. There was no way I could comfort my mother. She wasn't the one who needed comforting. It was my father who I ran to.

Tears were streaming down my face and I fell to my knees on the cold, dirty tile floor next to my father's bed. Taking his cold, rubbery hand in mine, pressing his palm against my tear streaked face, I could still smell the lingering of his final cigarette on his hand. He was dying—or, according to the doctor, was already brain dead. But I could still see him breathe; I could see his lungs expand as he took each breath, his chest trembling as he released each one. Dead? How could that be? It was

only a week ago that he had come out to watch my son's football game. Only four days ago he had told me he loved me. It is inevitable that a child buries a parent, but that doesn't make it any easier.

My sisters, mother, and I gathered that night in my parents' house; I walked into my parents' bedroom, looking at the surroundings as if seeing them for the first time. I walked toward my father's closet, looking at the door, white, paint peeling. It squeaked as I opened it. "I really need to repaint this," he had said to me just last week.

Walking into the closet, I closed the door behind me, shutting out the noise, the light, and engulfing me in his scent. I wrapped myself in his clothes that hung around me, and without thought, I peeled off my jacket, letting it slip to the floor. I draped his favorite sweater over my shoulders and pulled my arms through the sleeves. Zipping it closed was like having him wrap his arms around me. There would be no more bear hugs, no more scratchy whiskers against my cheek as he kissed me hello or goodbye. No more fingers running through my hair, pulling out the knots.

Slipping my jacket over my father's sweater, I buttoned the jacket closed and tucked the long sweater up under my coat. I opened the closet door and told my family I was going home. I walked out into the night with my father's sweater hidden under my coat, like a thief in the night. Ratty and old, that sweater still holds together nine years later, almost as if it knows that sometimes, even a grown woman needs to feel her daddy's arms around her.



## ***KISS OF FIRE (THE TANGO)***

Heat, Anger  
Fear, Desire  
A look, a breath, hands splayed as they glide  
Turning, and pulling, begging, and caressing  
Bodies pressed close together  
Each one giving  
Each one taking

Seduction, Dominance  
Passion, Surrender  
Tightly woven, two hearts beating  
He draws her near, she slinks away  
Hands trail, bodies shiver  
Eyes wide open

A Slap, a Sigh  
A Kiss, a Moan  
Moving together their longing silent  
He brushes against her they glide, as they twirl  
Feet tangling as hands linger  
Which one is conquered  
Which one the master

### ***LITERATURE***



**LYNN BURGHART**

*Kiss of Fire (The Tango)*  
poetry

***VOICES 2011***



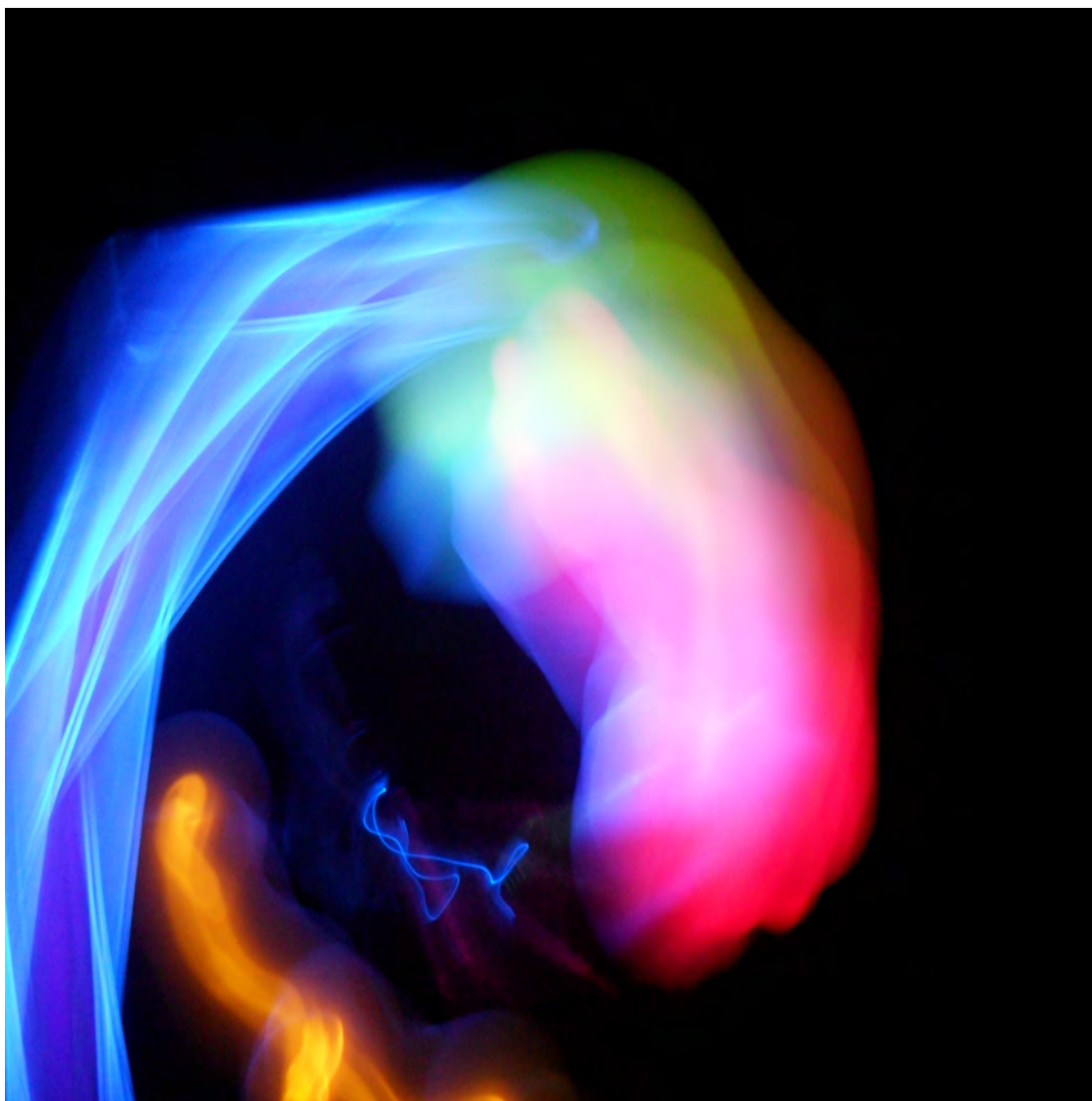


**CHIP HUMBERTSON**

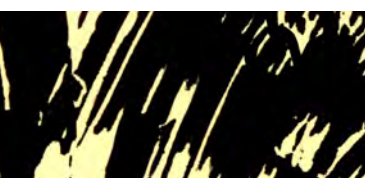
*The Jon Peschke*  
oil on canvas  
32" x 24"



***VISUAL ART***



***VISUAL ART***



**MICHELLE WHITT**

*The Beginning*  
digital print  
8" x 8"

***VOICES 2011***



## VISUAL ART



## ***I SAW A GIRAFFE CRY***

They loped hurriedly past our vehicle,  
eight or ten reticulated giraffe.  
In the Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania  
life teemed, majestic and cruel.

One tall necked beauty turned back,  
hesitated, gazed at a small patch  
of acacia trees and shrubs. She knew  
they were there, the lions who took her baby.

The herd moved on. Some stopped  
and looked back at her, then caught up.  
She stepped toward the trees, but  
turned suddenly as the ground shook  
with a low guttural warning from the cats.

She passed directly before us and  
I looked up at her glassy black eyes.  
They were wet and a tear slid down  
and off to the ground. She moved on.

### ***LITERATURE***



**PATRICIA HARE**

*I Saw a Giraffe Cry*  
poetry

***VOICES 2011***



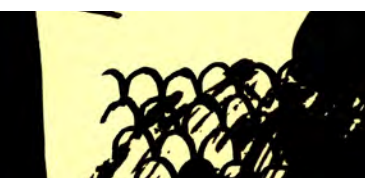


**JESSICA PIWNICKI**  
*Obliterated Elegance*  
charcoal  
27" x 11"





## ***VISUAL ART***

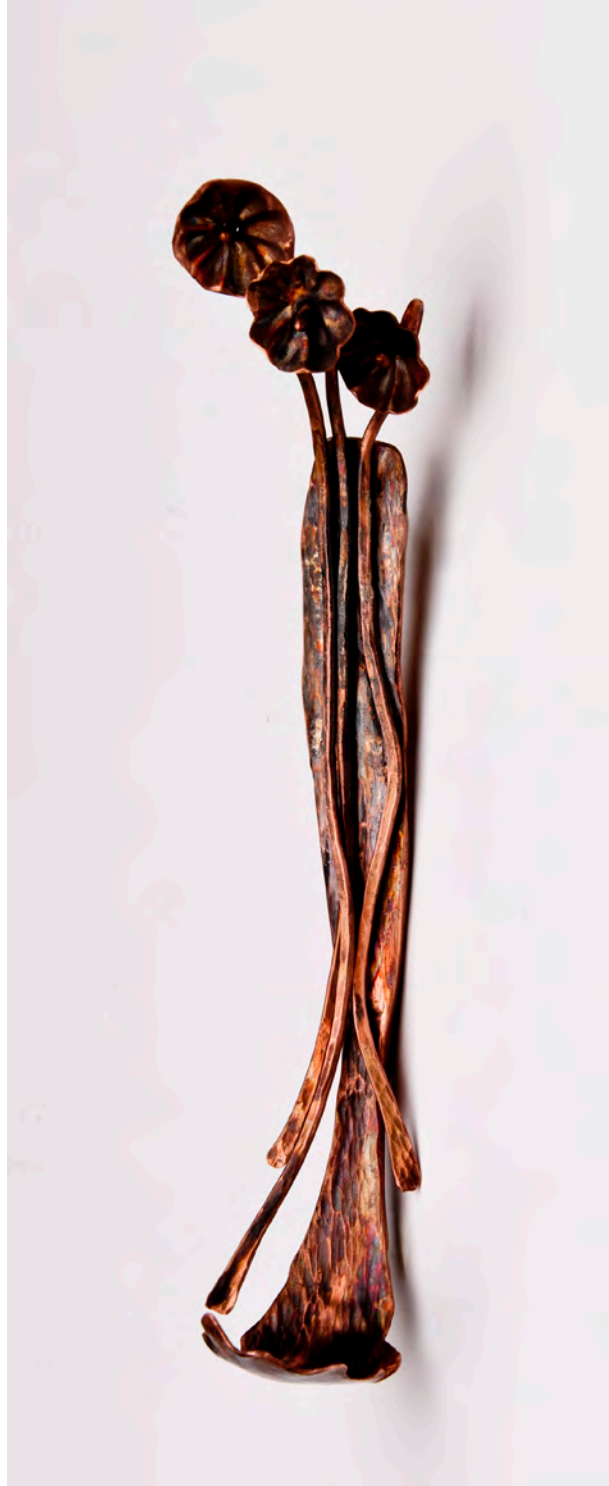


**ANTHONY SAMUEL GRANA**

*Untitled*  
oil on canvas  
60" x 72"

***VOICES 2011***





***VISUAL ART***

**SYNDI SIMON**  
*The Taste of Nature*  
forged copper  
8" x 2" x 1"





## ***VISUAL ART***



**PATRICIA VOLLKOMMER**

*I Believe in Fire*  
pottery  
9.5" x 5" x 3"

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## JOSETTE'S ROSE

I met Josette after one of my many daily walks. Many because my Golden Retriever, Ms Maxi, needed exercise since we'd moved from a house to a condo.

When we first met, Josette walked simply for the exercise, but after meeting Ms Maxi, Josette said she walked hoping to run into Ms Maxi and me. She loved dogs.

Although our run-ins were never planned, I enjoyed our meetings, the walking together, the talking. Ms Maxi loved the fuss Josette made over her as well as the treats she brought.

The friendship we developed over time was casual—no coffees or lunches or get togethers of any kind; we were simply simpatico, content with our daily pleasant meetings.

Ms Maxi was no youngster when we moved to the condo complex. Because of Ms Maxi's age and failing health, her death about a year later was no surprise. Although I missed her so much, I did continue to walk, and continued to bump into Josette.

A few months after Ms Maxi's death, I saw Josette's ample shortness drifting toward me led by a tiny bundle of curly brown energy attached to a leash. Since Josette had never mentioned wanting a dog, I felt surprised. Personally I had decided that another dog was not in my future, not in a condo.

Josette explained that her family decided she needed company. Although she wasn't entirely convinced, Josette accepted the brown bundle of love graciously. And so the little mutt was called Muggzy.

As things turned out, energetic, mini Muggzy grew to become Josette's loyal companion, protector, one who grumbled at strangers, and friend.

Josette returned those favors in kind, despite

the responsibilities tiny Muggzy imposed.

Even without Ms Maxi, Josette, Muggzy, and I fell into our old walking routine: chatting, sometimes clucking over the latest condo gossip. I noticed Josette growing slim. I wasn't surprised. Walking will often do that.

Over the months that we walked, Josette's steps slowed. Muggzy grew frustrated, tugged at her leash as if trying to speed the pace. Every now and then, I'd relieve Josette of the leash. Then Josette sat on a near-by bench to wait while Muggzy strolled me at a brisk pace, but the little dog always looked back at Josette as if assuring itself that her mistress was a-okay.

Then came a morning that I didn't run into Josette and Muggzy. I figured they were visiting family. Although I was surprised that Josette hadn't mentioned going away. Daily, I watched for them. I considered ringing Josette's doorbell but didn't. No sense being a nosey neighbor.

A couple of weeks passed before I spotted Muggzy leading a younger woman down the sidewalk. I recalled that Josette had sometimes mentioned her daughter, Jillian. I called out and the woman stopped. Then Jillian told me that Josette was recovering from a complete double mastectomy. Josette hadn't even felt the pea-sized lump.

My jaw tightened as I tried to keep my sudden tears in check. Images of Josette flashed before me: Tired, slow steps, weight loss. Symptoms so easy to ignore when Josette looked healthy and rosy. Within weeks, it looked like Josette was on the road to recovery after surviving surgery, chemo and radiation. Rehab took time, but eventually Josette was able to walk Muggzy again. I made it a point to walk along, occasionally taking the leash and set-

ting Josette on the bench per our old routine.

It seems strange, when I think about it, that our friendship never extended beyond the dog-walking. Was it instinct demanding that we keep our relationship casual...light...that it was too late for more? Who knows.

On the other hand, we didn't seem to need more. And Josette was always a joy to meet, talk to, laugh with over something insignificant like a funny TV episode.

Although Josette's surgery, treatment, and rehab appeared to be successful, she survived a mere six months.

After her death, I learned from Jillian about how much Josette had loved roses. White roses, especially. During Josette's recovery, Jillian set a white miniature rose plant on the table beside her mother's bed. The little plant brightened those long, dark days.

Weeks after the funeral, after the moving truck pulled away, Jillian planted Josette's white rose in our little English Garden, a stone's throw from Josette's condo. It's been there now for three years—prolific and peace inspiring—outstanding. I speak to it daily.

Occasionally, Jillian walks Muggzy back to our complex. The little fur ball always tugs her toward the English Garden, then stops in front of the white rose plant still thriving, just a stone's throw from the window where the dog once sat watching the world go by.

When Muggzy visits the garden, I reach down, stroke her little head and tell her that I call the rose, Josette.

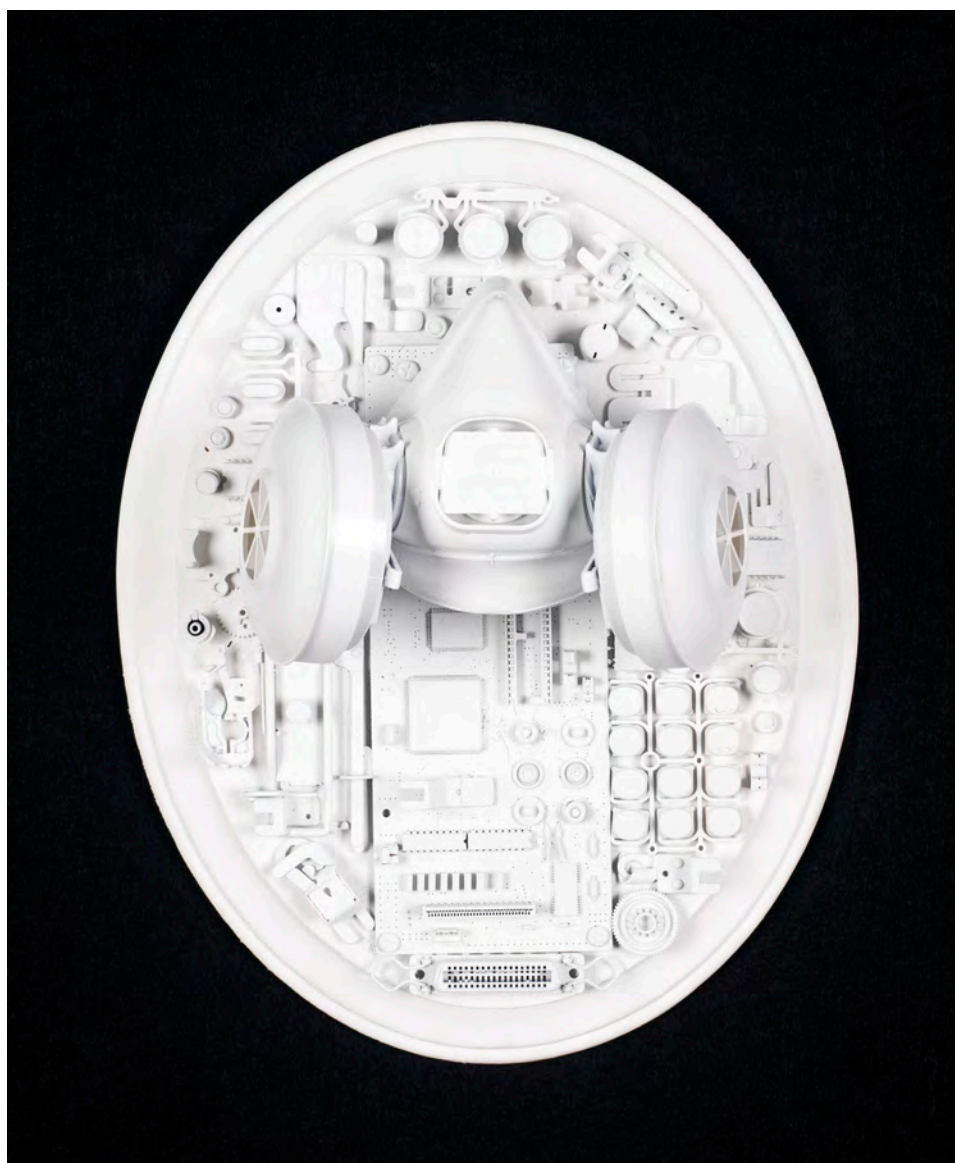
The little fur ball knows. Muggzy feels Josette's presence lingering there.

## LITERATURE

ELAINE SHAW

*Josette's Rose*  
creative non-fiction





## VISUAL ART

**KRISTAL GARCIA**  
*Respirator*  
 mixed media  
 14.5" x 11.5" x 4"

**VOICES 2011**



## VISUAL ART

**ZACH WALTERS**  
*Reflection*  
digital photograph  
8" x 10"





## BEAUTY OF THE WINTER

**L**iving in the suburbs of Chicago keeps one guessing what the weather will bring from moment to moment. If you don't like the weather, wait a few minutes and it will change. Winter seems to grow longer each year. The cold begins in November and winter gear needs to be unpacked just a little earlier. There are times when the seasons tend to skip autumn altogether.

The last several years have been unseasonably cold, even for our region. I find myself searching for anything positive in those brutally cold and snowy days. Cabin fever can set in very quickly as the long cold days seem to blend into each other. Longing for days of sunshine becomes something that we hear in everyday conversation. When it seems like it will be never-ending, looking to the beauty in nature brings about some positive emotions in one's gray perspective.

One February morning, I awoke to the trees covered in, what looked like, sifted powdered sugar. Every inch of the surrounding area was covered in an almost fantasy like vision. It was a result of the freezing fog, something I don't think I'd ever before witnessed.

With everything that the freezing fog enveloped, nothing had been left untouched. Maybe this was God's way of opening our eyes to all of the beauty around us. I have driven Route 14 many times, and for the first time, in the car, I was aware of the beautiful natural landscape that lined the road, the deep red colors of the barns that sit back from the farm houses. Every spindle in the front porch railings seemed to have been etched in silver. A single light was shining from each porch, soon to be extinguished by the full light of day. The fences had short stacks of white that rose to the top of their pointed finishes. A beautiful memory

to add to the collection of portraits that nature provides each of us every day.

I took in every ounce of this beauty from the warmth of my car, knowing that once I left the moving cocoon, the bitter cold would snatch my breath away. As I continued my drive back home, I had to remind myself to focus on driving, but it was more than I could stand. I just wanted to burn this image into my brain, to save it for those other days that seem so gray and dull. I was saddened by the quick departure of the beauty this freezing fog had created, not knowing if I would ever encounter such a mystifying event again.

We must brace ourselves for the cold, bitter winters, but the weather is something that has never halted the busyness of the locals. We adjust to what Mother Nature brings us each year, knowing that the eventual thaw will bring another season.

### LITERATURE



**TRACY SILVA**

*Beauty of the Winter*  
creative non-fiction

**VOICES 2011**





## VISUAL ART

**MARY SWENSON**

*Winter*  
oil on canvas  
40" x 32"





*VOICES 2011*





## VISUAL ART

**DYLAN BOND**  
*Decades of Encyclopedias*  
digital photograph  
8.5" x 11"



## JASON'S PARADE

**T**he newspaper article informed the public that the parade route would extend two to three miles down a busy thoroughfare. Instructions were provided for the expected overflow parking. Participants would include honor guard as well as city officials. I was certain the rhythmic, heart wrenching staccato of drums would follow the procession, the percussive, persistent message caroming off the shops, marquees, and naked winter tree tops, echoing the pronouncement through the gray day that another soldier was a victim of war.

For several days before, the same picture of Jason was a part of the local newspaper as well as repeated inclusions of his obituary offering a summary of a very brief life. The camouflaged, billed hat worn low on his head framed a somber, dark eyed man (boy) and offered a glimpse to the reading public of war's mainstay.

Throughout the public presentation of this hometown hero, I could not help but wonder if Jason ever received this kind of respect or recognition during his twenty-two years. I could not help but wonder if teachers and classmates and acquaintances nurtured him with love, friendship, and encouragement, or if he had to wait until his death in a far away place for a far away reason to receive any kind of acknowledgement.

Such irony. From the destruction, devastation, and stark reality of war come parades, pomp, and pageantry. Flags waving, eyes filled with proud tears, and the murmur of somber voices will bring the community together. Those who have never met each other or Jason will meet and greet and agree that this certainly was a beautiful tribute for their fallen soldier.

The greatest tragedy of all is that this parade was ever necessary and that Jason will never know.

## LITERATURE

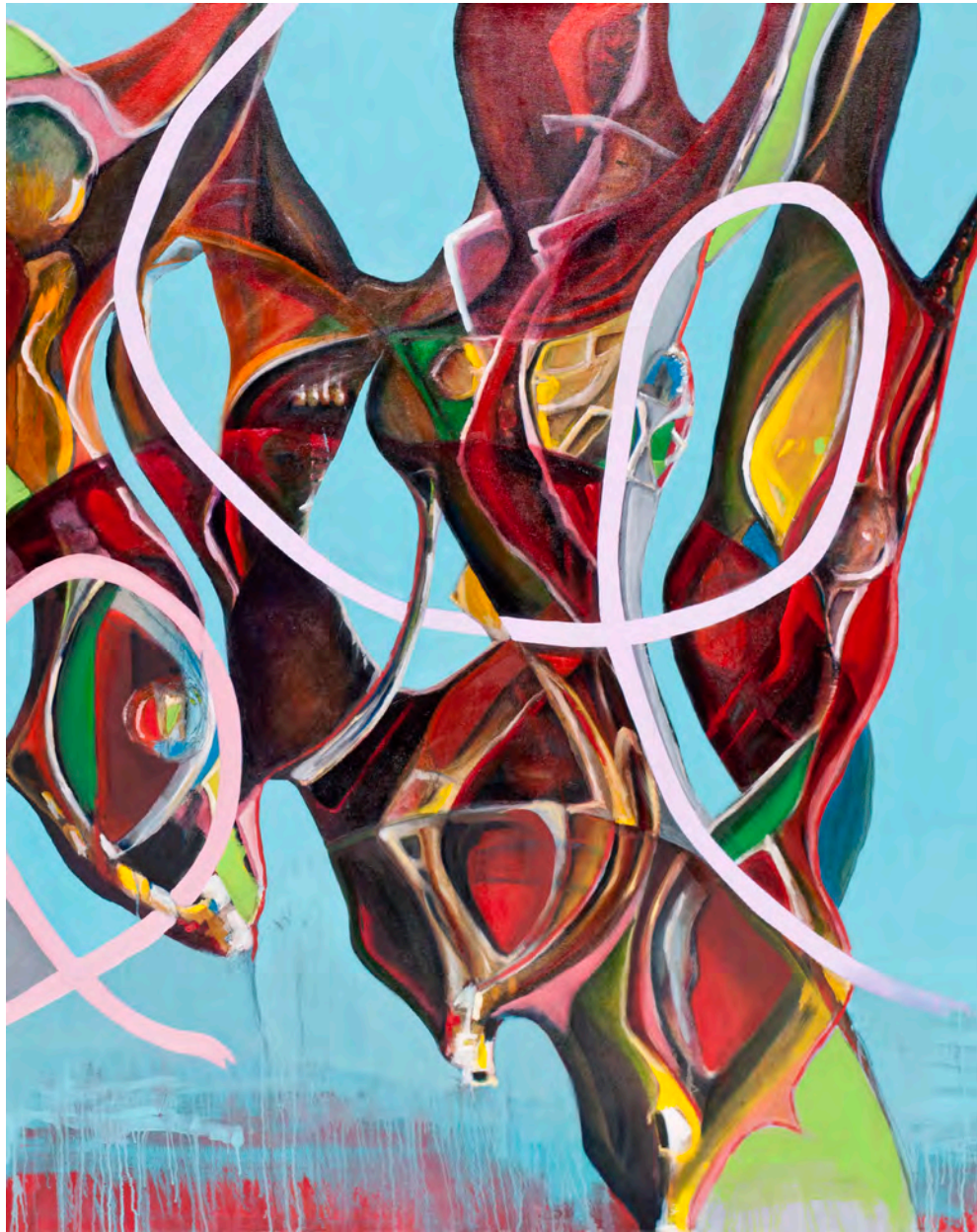


**JOAN SKIBA**

*Jason's Parade*  
creative non-fiction

**VOICES 2011**

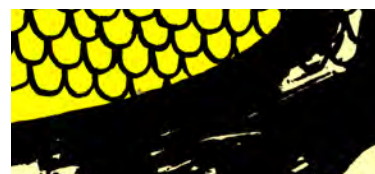




## VISUAL ART

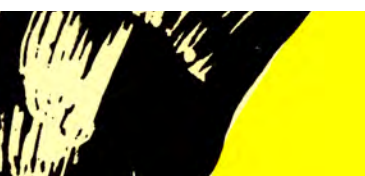
**RICK NEUBAUER**

*Turning Point*  
oil on canvas  
60" x 48"





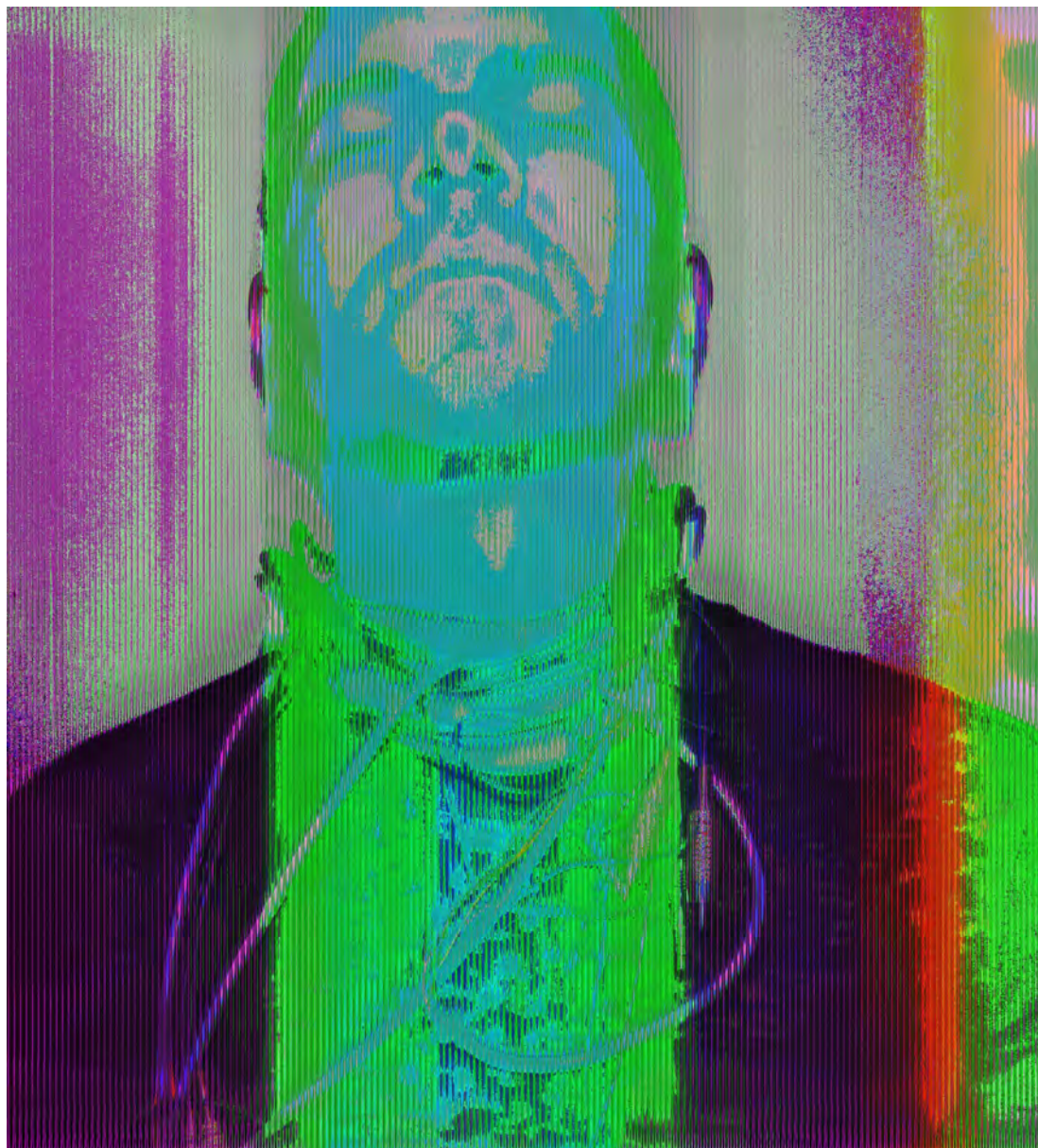
## VISUAL ART



**JEFF SIMON**  
*Organicka*  
 digital illustration  
 24" x 18"

**VOICES 2011**





## VISUAL ART

**JOSHUA HILGART-ROY**  
*I Was a Being of Light*  
digital media  
9" x 8.25"





## VISUAL ART

**ADAM OPARYK**  
*Radiofy Me*  
 oil on canvas  
 60" x 48"

**VOICES 2011**



# MY DADDY IS A SOLDIER

Daddy, how was your day?  
*Precious daughter of mine,  
the sun was glaring, illuminating terror and tragedy  
in the eyes around me,  
smiles devoured by fixed, ghoulish grimaces.*  
Yes, Daddy, but how was your day?  
*I pulled triggers aimed at nameless strangers  
who pulled triggers back at me.  
Explosions and screams eroding and rotting  
the gift of precious quiet.*  
But, Daddy, your day—tell me how it was.  
*Daylight betrayed me as I desperately sought shadows  
to block and parry the fear and the ferocity I faced—  
the shadow, a reprieve, but only a moment,  
then on.*  
Daddy, you need to tell me...your day...all about it.  
*I'm trying to explain, but words are wanting—  
how to tell you of my day—  
the horror in my being  
has smothered all sense of sensible and sane.*  
Daddy, just an answer—tell me, how was your day?  
*My sweet child,  
my day was disintegrating all around me.  
So will my tomorrow.  
No Alpha, no Omega, until death says Good Night.*

## LITERATURE

JOAN SKIBA

*My Daddy is a Soldier*  
poetry



## *LA FANTÔME*

The day I died  
I married a ghost,  
And it kills me to say it,  
But I love her the most.  
Still I'm always mourning  
So who'm I to boast  
About the one I love:  
The one who's a ghost.

She follows me 'round  
And she haunts my dreams,  
Though she's seldom there  
It always seems.  
My breath like smoke  
When she hears my screams—  
“Please, wake me up!  
It must be a dream...”

Your body's preserved;  
It's all I've left,  
Your cool, chilled touch,  
Your freezing breath.  
I'll keep you safe,  
I learned from the best,  
Locked in the attic,  
Upstairs, to the left.

Should I be at peace  
With my beautiful ghost,  
I'd ascend, and move on,  
Like a wedding toast.  
Then she would haunt  
Alone, coast to coast,  
And that cannot be, love.  
You're my bride, my ghost.

### *LITERATURE*



**LUKE PETERS**

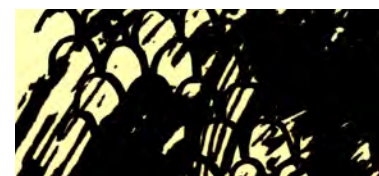
*La Fantôme*  
poetry

*VOICES 2011*



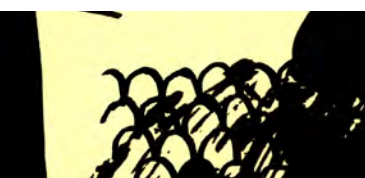
## VISUAL ART

**TIMOTHY ALCOCK**  
*Infested Waters*  
oil and acrylic  
40" x 47"





## *VISUAL ART*



**DOUG WEBSTER**

*Mr. Blue*  
clay  
9" x 7" x 4.5"

*VOICES 2011*

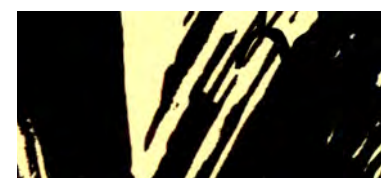




## VISUAL ART

**GREGG LUPER**

*Amazon Andrea Pearson*  
inkjet print  
10" x 15"







**VISUAL ART**  
**BEST OF MAGAZINE**



**COLLEEN GRANDRATH**

*In the Boiler Room*  
 digital photography  
 8.5" x 11"

**VOICES 2011**

## ***THE BURN PILE***

Can I hear red?  
I can see the red leaves in autumn.  
I can feel the red chill in the wind.  
I hear red as a crisp, fierce roar of fire.

The burn pile started slowly, timidly,  
licking at the edges of thick wood blocks  
without hurting them, consuming  
slender sticks and slats of wood.

Then the red and yellow flames began a dance  
in the center of the pile. It was a fandango  
of flashing flames for our entertainment.  
We alternated feeding the pile of scrap lumber,  
dodging flames leaping out at us  
unexpectedly, as the wind changed.

Soon there was a low rumbling force of  
red hot coals consuming scraps of wood  
at an increasing pace.  
The flaming beast was ravenous now,  
like a giant animal who was tasting  
raw meat for the first time.

The red flames outnumbered the yellow,  
stretching out even farther to whisk each  
piece of wood from our gloved hands.  
The heat became so intense, we could only  
throw the wood from a distance, feeling  
the skin burn on our faces.

The red hot fire was a living thing now  
and we were its keepers. It lapped up  
patches of green grass just outside the  
burning ring. Charred embers tumbled out.  
At its height, we had fed it the last scrap.

We watched in wonder as the fire leapt  
and danced with the wind, raging, smoldering  
and very, very slowly dying from the outside in.  
I heard red that day. I heard it. I saw it. I felt it.  
I smelled it and tasted it. I saw it live and die.

## ***LITERATURE***

**PATRICIA HARE**  
*The Burn Pile*  
poetry





***VISUAL ART***



**NICOLE SHERMAN**

*Brianna's Toes*  
photograph  
9" x 14"

***VOICES 2011***





## VISUAL ART

**GLORIA STEWART**

*Olympia in Camo-After Manet, After Rivers*  
acrylic  
18" x 56"



## ***FAMILIAR PLACES***

Resting old stones show their wrinkles  
As ferns primp for the next breeze  
And a meandering brook divides canopy shadows  
for sunlight  
Highlighting fairie seeds as  
Lazy floating targets for foraging  
Dragons on the wing.  
A tornado of gnats in and out of moist shadows  
Form abstract distraction  
From tranquility as  
Familiar musty nasal memories are rudely interrupted  
By tickling goldenrod pollen.  
A reprise of orchestrated serenity  
Nurturing joy like an old Friend  
Visiting again after being away.

### ***LITERATURE***



**JEROME WENDT**  
*Familiar Places*  
poetry

***VOICES 2011***



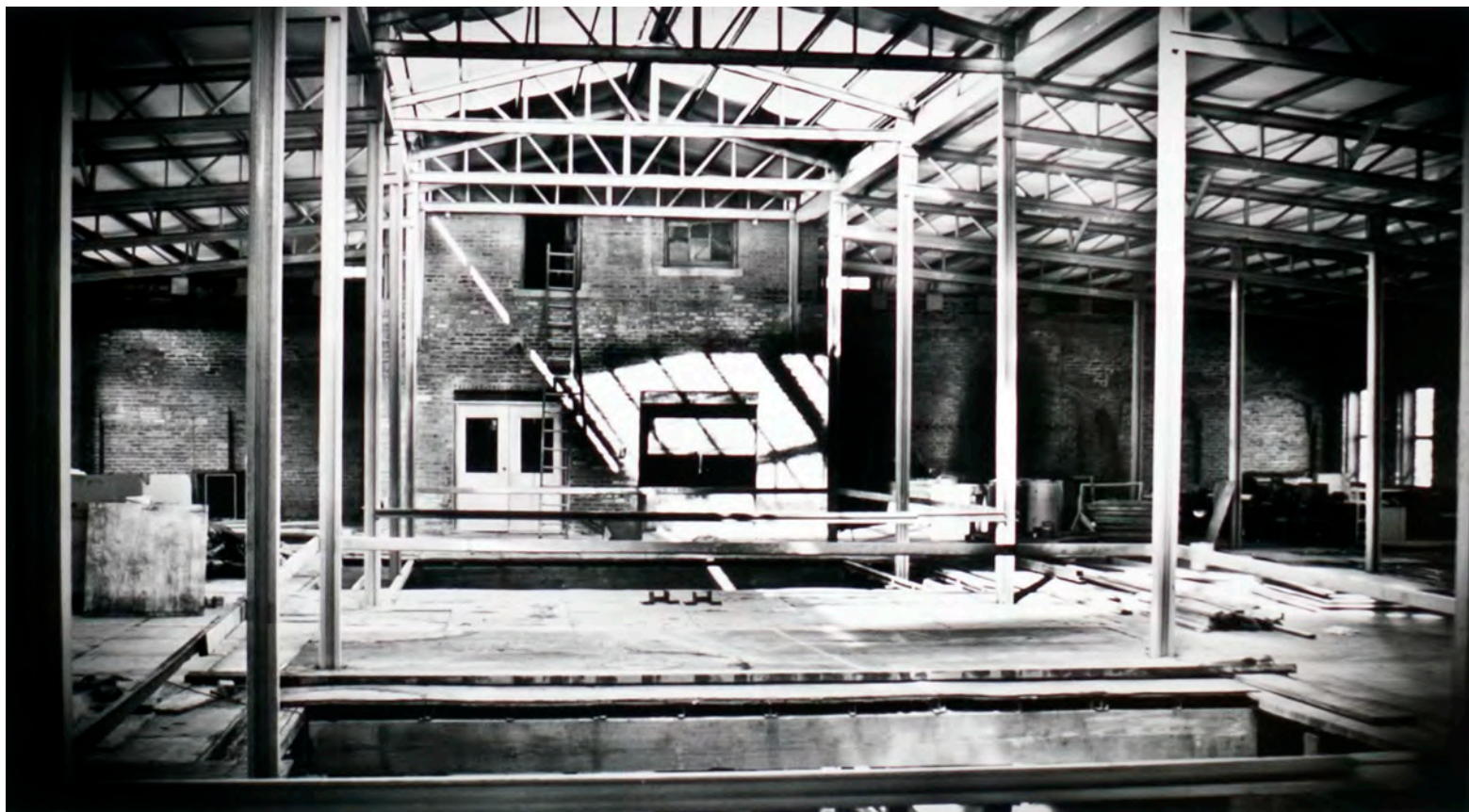
## VISUAL ART

**ASHLEY ERIN WENNERSTROM**

*Grandma's Attic*  
physical art  
7.34" x 11"







## ***VISUAL ART***



**A.J. DAVIDSON**

*Frames*

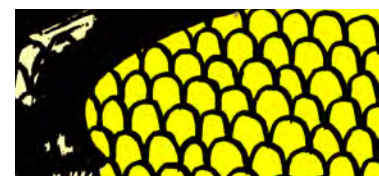
digital photograph  
8.5" x 11"

***VOICES 2011***



## VISUAL ART

**HEATHER GRANT**  
*Twisted*  
clay  
7" x 15" x 15"





***VISUAL ART***



**NANCY TERRANOVA**  
*Pierced Double Walled Bowl*  
porcelain  
3" x 6.5" x 6.5"

***VOICES 2011***



# REBIRTHING CYNTHIA

“Cynthia LaRousse is not a passé persona. Oh, it had been years since I had last done legitimate theater, I know, but I kept active with voice-overs and readings at the Oak Glen Library children’s story-telling. But now, now I had opportunity to actually ‘walk the boards’ again, and I was ecstatic.

It’s not to say that I was ever a star of the greatest magnitude. But there was a time when I was well recognized, even sought after, because I was a worthy and versatile player. While I never made a magazine cover, there were numerous articles written about me, I turned many heads in the day, and I even gave out more than a few autographs. Saying that Cynthia LaRousse just ‘got by’ with her craft wouldn’t nearly be the whole story. There was glamour and bright lights and even a ‘stage door Johnny’...or two! And I wasn’t ready to leave it all behind.

Now came this new opportunity to play a romantic lead. Darling, it was just summer stock, but a casting call with many attractive women, all of whom were much younger than I, resulting in me being chosen was enough to put me in a cloud. And this play could end up being picked up for a run in Connecticut, if things went well. After all these years, my star was to shine again. I would, script willing, be able to hear that sweet sound of adulation. It was just what my ego needed. You have had to have been onstage at the end of performance to know the feeling of ‘owning’ an audience. Applause is a big ego builder, yes; but what I’m talking about is being in the moment of a particularly emotive dialogue, seeing the audience hanging on your every word, just silent, enrapt at

the pith of your words. Then, reading next morning’s critic columns with words like ‘held the whole story in her eyes,’ or ‘gave new meaning to the role’ was Hollandaise on the eggs. But I digress.

After weeks of blocking, group reads, rehearsals, past all the sound and light checks, wardrobe fittings, and rewrites, the big day arrived.

Entering the theater with great expectation and a stomach that could make butter, I greeted my thespian compatriots. Flouncing past comments of ‘break a leg,’ ‘it’ll be a memorable evening,’ and even a couple ‘you look fabulous,’ I began to feel I was back home.

The play went well. A few tardy cues, a reluctant prop feather duster, and the curtain came down. I heard a muffled sound of applause. The cast lined up, holding hands and smiling like silly school girls. God, it was grand. Curtain and lights came back up and the room positively swelled. I was floating.

Backstage to accolades and brief visitations of friends and fans, I basked in my return. My dressing room was abloom with bouquets! I was reborn, and this play was my resurrection. At sixty-eight, I was an *ingénue* again. Cynthia LaRousse could still run this damn race. I still had it! If there was ever a tonic for an old actor, this was it.

Now, I carefully prepared for the coronation. There was an opening night party where all had opportunity to really glamour up, with the case going forth, meeting their adoring public. I had stripped off the stage makeup and carefully re-crafted a flawless, powdered porcelain face. Using Jean Patou *Joy*, I enveloped myself with soft scent of luxury as I made my way past fans. Oh, yes, and my

dress. I had a vintage ivory *Chanel* gown purchased from the studio in my salad days. It had been more cherished than worn, but it still fit. It was a comfort to drape myself in its soft, flowing panels. So, now, my entrance: that addictive buzz of a crowd’s critical commentary surrounded, enveloped me. It was *all* about me. After polite nods and small *bon mots*, I made my way to the bar. With dramatic flip of the hair, I turned to the bartender, a distinguished gentleman in formal bar-back attire. ‘I’ll have a Gibson, please,’ I oozed.

‘Certainly, madam. You know, I haven’t had an order for one of those in forty years,’ he shot forth.

Sabers of searing steel plunged my heart. My porcelain face cracked and the Medusa was revealed. My *Chanel* hung limp upon my crêpey *décolleté*. Inside of me, ‘old, faded, jaded hag’ resonated. I swooned to a chaise where moist droplets pooled in my crows’ feet...

Here I stopped, leaving the telling of “Cynthia” behind and breaking my train of thought as playwright creating this outline for my work in progress. I sit back from the keyboard and segue into thinking how I might work, “If you peel an onion, you must expect to make tears” into dialogue for my final script. My new play, *Birthing Cynthia*, as a remake of *Sunset Boulevard*, is sure to please audiences as a fresh, more modern, and less grandiose take on Norma Desmond. With this outline almost completed, I can now turn to more actual dialogue, confident that Cynthia’s story will spell critical success for me. Journalists so like drama, even when it’s contrived. I can tell you right here and now: with *Birthing Cynthia*, critics won’t be calling me a “dinosaur hack” any longer!

LITERATURE  
BEST OF MAGAZINE



JEROME WENDT  
*Rebirthing Cynthia*  
fiction



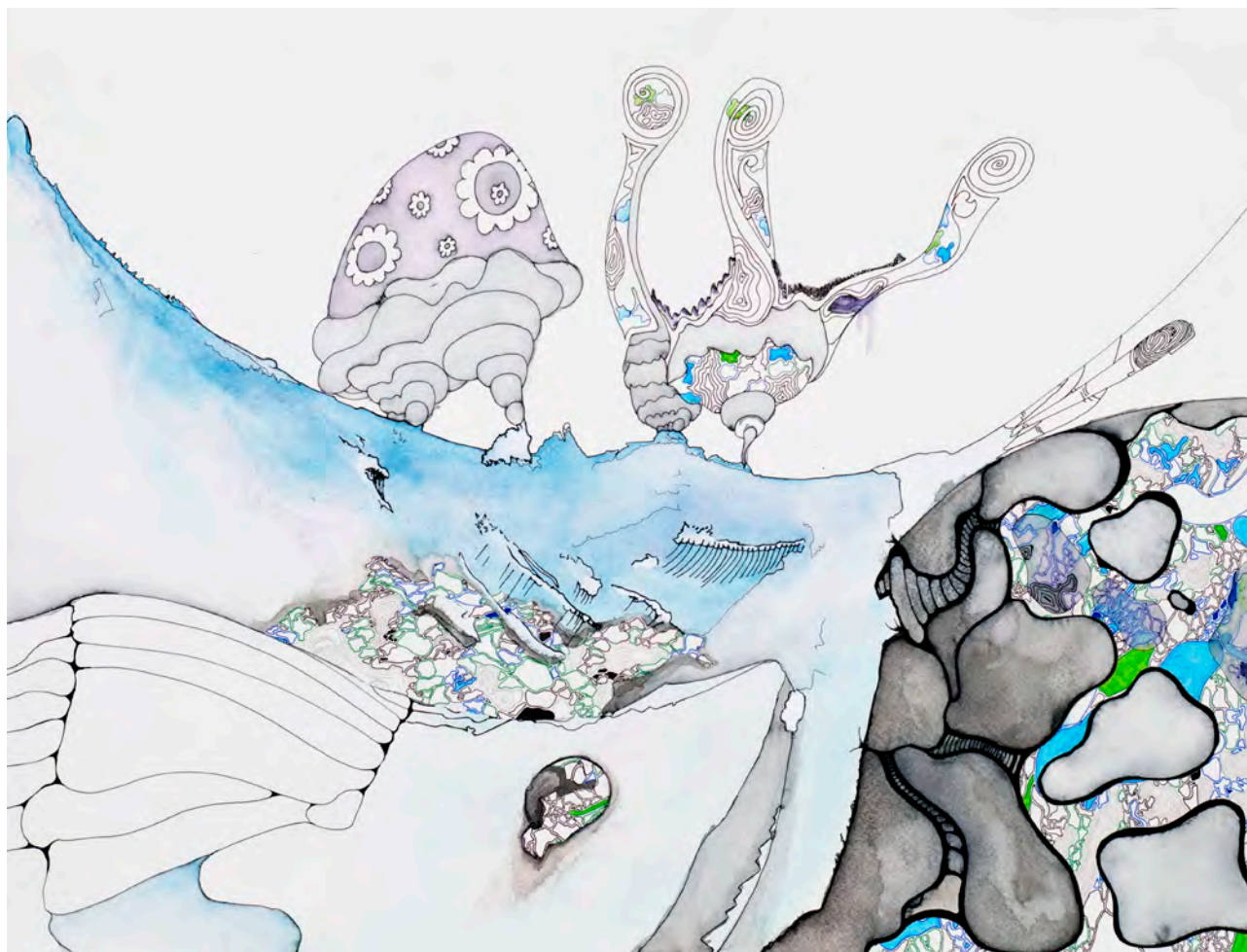
## VISUAL ART



**RICH GRUSDIS**

*Tea Party*  
oil on canvas  
24" x 48"

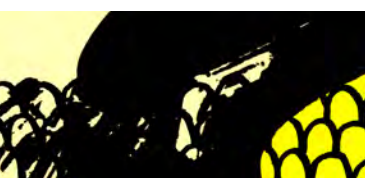
**VOICES 2011**







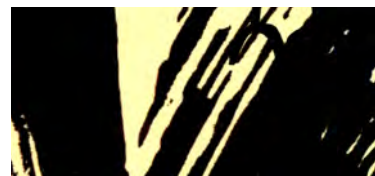
## ***VISUAL ART***



**DONALD STEPHENS**

*Untitled*  
watercolor  
12" x 9"

***VOICES 2011***



## ***TRANSITION***

Wrinkled and fragile geriatric wafers  
spent from supple green canopies  
protesting shred and crunch  
under pulling forged tines  
disturbing made beds  
into piles of crispy cushions  
soon to plume; wafting  
into voluptuous curling contrails  
so delicious with pungent acidity;  
leaving pity puddles of gray palette  
soon to slurry and wash away clean  
by first cold rain  
marking finality of  
relentless transitions.

### ***LITERATURE***



**JEROME WENDT**  
*Transition*  
poetry

***VOICES 2011***







**MARY MARIUTTO**

*Nine White Deer Will Lead You*  
oil on canvas  
40" x 40"

**VOICES 2011**