



WUSM | 2015

# HIPPOCRENE

**HIPPOCRENE** is an arts magazine by and for the students, staff, and faculty of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis (WUSM). We accept submissions year-round and publish each spring. Issues are freely available to all current medical students, graduate students in the Division of Biology and Biomedical Sciences (DBBS), and medical school and DBBS faculty.

Download an electronic version of this issue, browse past issues, and learn more about our organization as well as local arts events at [hippocrene.wustl.edu](http://hippocrene.wustl.edu). Please send submissions, comments, and questions to [litmag.wustl@gmail.com](mailto:litmag.wustl@gmail.com).

Thank you for picking up this issue of Hippocrene and for continuing to support the arts in all its forms within our community.

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2015

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Visit us online at [artscomm.wustl.edu](http://artscomm.wustl.edu).

*To foster a formalized arts tradition at Washington University in order to add richness to the medical school community. To provide a resource for students and groups in the cultivation and representation of art—in all its forms—on the medical campus.*

The Arts Commission supports these events and programs:

**ANNUAL ART SHOW.** Displaying visual arts created by students, staff, and faculty of the School of Medicine in the atrium of the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center.

**COFFEEHOUSE CONCERT SERIES.** A relaxed and informal setting for classical, jazz, and other musical and spoken word performances by members of the medical community.

**WINTER CAM CONCERT.** An annual medical campus-wide concert held in January for musicians to perform in the medical school community.

# Visual

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Maroon Lake | Tim Supakorndej, WUMS MSTP VIII | *digital photography*







**The Goddess Selene** | Tirth Patel, WUMS MSTP IV | *digital astrophotography*



**Tree** | Daniel Greenstein, WUMS III | *digital photography*

## In the Shadow of the Mountain

The old man is singing  
a sad smile on his lips  
night clammers up the hill  
behind him, her rough back  
scraping the lowermost stars  
The tea besides him is cold  
It's not what he wants  
a cigarette  
a woman  
a pair of pants  
to sleep again  
unawakened by the harsh light  
that lives on Mount Baldy  
that seeps into his pores  
and out of his song  
(an old one for sure  
from the bygone age  
of laughter and whiskey  
parted thighs and secret places  
the young women scrawled  
over every scrap of paper  
pornographic souvenirs  
of trips to his own memory)  
but this song, it is chaste  
full of loss and longing  
"An old woman gave us shelter,  
kept us hidden in the garret,  
then the soldiers came;  
she died without a whisper."  
and the old man is soon to follow

Michael Slade, WUMS III

## Ardor

I've tied my tongue a butterfly net  
with holes too tall too wide,  
the wingéd creatures swallow past  
and caterwaul inside.

My cutflesh cupid chrysalid now  
cocoons the feathered flight  
of color dusted leaves that lift  
off gravity from fright.

You, leman lepidopterist, most  
excite their nervous flitting  
for fear that needled steel affix  
the heart to species fitting.

Then underglass and well preserved  
a sample will they be,  
splayed specimen among the rest:  
desire in apogee.

### Glossary

chrysalid: a cocoon; a transitional state.

leman: a lover; an illicit lover, esp. a mistress.

lepidopterist: a person who studies or collects butterflies.





**Khmer Rouge, Decapitated Buddha** | Ian Ferguson, WUMS I | *digital photography*



**Solitude** | Thomas Hong, WUMS I | *digital photography*

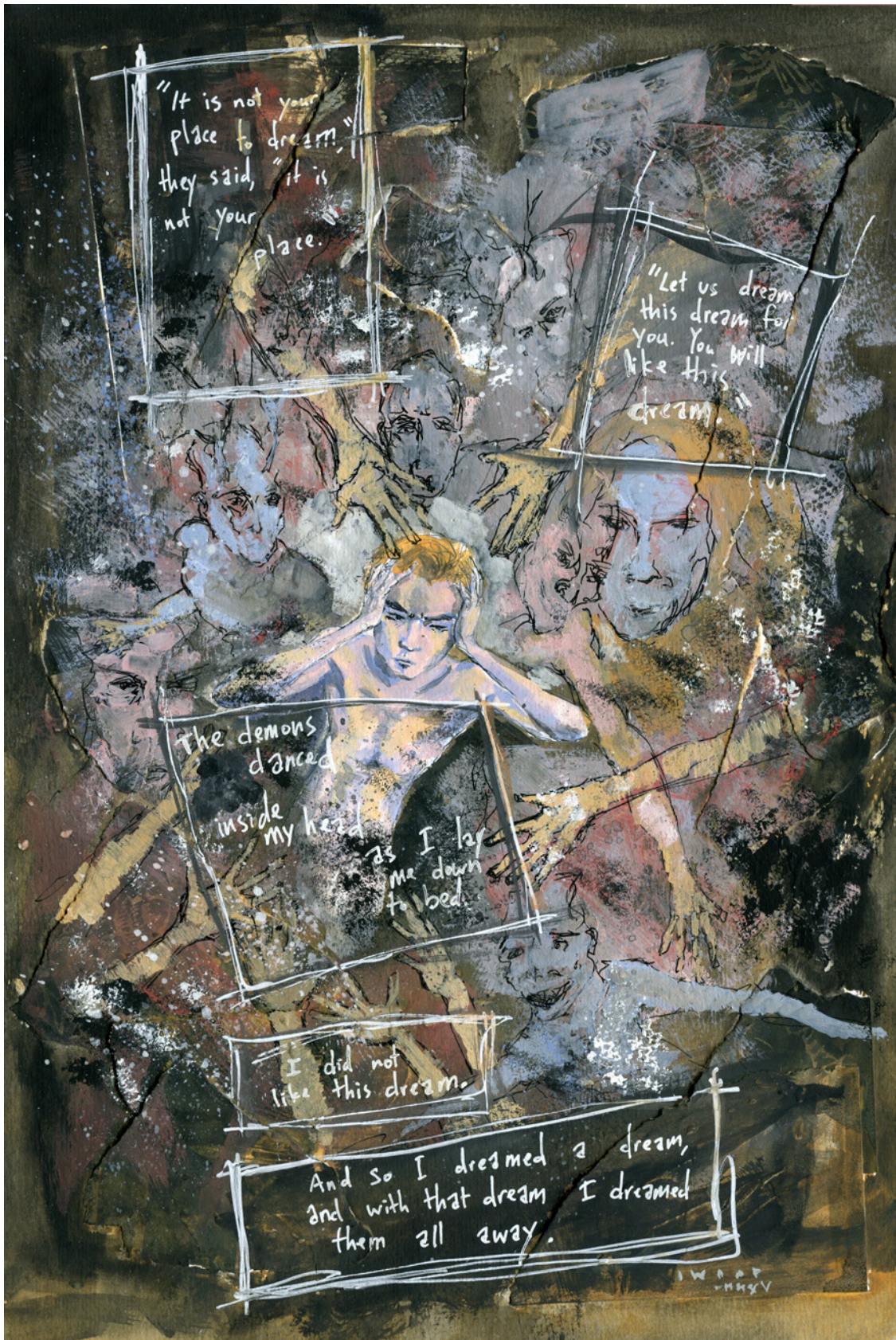




**The UNFORGIVEN #1.3: Outlaws, page 1** | Tyler B. Ruff, Clinical Research Coordinator, Department of Oncology | *graphic novel — graphite on paper, digital text*

# Theory

We were better in theory  
Unlike evolution  
or quantum mechanics  
which work when tested.  
When pressure was applied to us,  
we snapped  
at each other,  
and our universe fell apart.  
Life in the macrocosm  
was the death of our microcosm.  
It wasn't gravity  
that held us down—  
it was the critical mass  
of the lives we carried:  
an atomic relationship  
meets the fear of a nuclear family  
and a half-life.  
We were killed in the fallout,  
the shadow of us  
etched into the once-was,  
the once-pure, once-proud, once-promising.  
Now our scattered atoms  
are free to become  
parts of something else  
and nothing lives  
in the exclusion zone.



**The Dreaming** | Ian Wood, WUMS I | gouache, acrylic, ink and collage on paper



**Untitled** | Melanie Quinn, Department of Ophthalmology | *digital photography*

# In Pursuit of the Perfect Words

Thursday afternoon, I took a seat in our large lecture auditorium, quite apprehensively. We didn't have an exam that day, nor were we learning a radically complicated physiologic process. I was nervous because today was the day we were going to be taught how to break bad news to a patient. We were given a short introduction explaining that we were to learn the "most difficult thing that a physician ever has to do," which only served to further unsettle me. After that, we were to break up into separate rooms in small groups of about 12 students and take turns telling a hired actor that he had hepatocellular carcinoma – liver cancer with a dismal prognosis. "6 to 20 months," I repeated to myself, trying to remember the pertinent details I would have to recite.

Part of me was excited, strangely enough, for the experience. I mean, moments like this are a big part of what drives people towards careers in medicine. Not the desire to be the bearer of bad news, of course, but to share in the most human hours of people's lives. To care for others in hardship. I very badly wanted to tell this fictional patient, this archetype of all those who I would tend to in the future, that I was there for him, to empathize with him, and to offer him hope.

When I got to the room, though, I was reminded yet again of the paradoxical nature of teaching communication in a field that relies so heavily on quantification and basis in evidence; a paradox summed quite nicely in the reading we were assigned the night before, "Several professional groups have published consensus guidelines on how to discuss bad news; however, few of those guidelines are evidence-based. The clinical efficacy of many standard recommendations has not been empirically demonstrated."<sup>1</sup> How do you empirically demonstrate success in comforting another human being? Can you forcibly quantify that which has no quantity? It had frustrated me in "patient communication" sessions before this one and it frustrated me again. The article went on to establish set guidelines for how to optimally communicate devastating news to another person – the "best" way to tell a patient that he is going to die.

Many describe certain aspects of medicine as an art, often including communication in the doctor-patient relationship. How do you tell a painter the best way to draw the sunrise? How do you tell a musician the best way to write a song? How can there be a best way to talk to a patient? And yet, this article, in convenient mnemonic fashion, ventured to do just that. The result? My classmates spoke to their "standardized patient" actors beautifully, choosing all the right words at all the right times in soothing and calming tone. But it just seemed so Xeroxed. The words were so similar. They all touched the same spot on the same shoulder of the same patient at the same time.

And so, I left that day feeling a little more disoriented. Empathy is such a wondrous, innately human emotion. When someone expresses sadness, there's an almost automatic, primitive drive to comfort him. I feel like each of these sessions that aim to teach me how to manufacture empathy slowly chips away at my intrinsic emotions. My interactions suddenly felt programmed. I spoke to a patient the next day in the hospital and I felt very hyperaware of the words I used and the expressions I made, wondering if they were optimal. It didn't flow freely, and it didn't feel natural. And I touched that same damn spot on his shoulder.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2001/1215/p1975.html>





The “Scrabble” Writing Technology | Francesco Spelta, WUMS II | *digital photography*



Timothy Laux, Department of Medicine, PGY-3 | *digital photography*

## polka dots

we saved the lucky charms marshmallows, divided and conquered them  
into little enclaves of shapes, like politicians watched their colors ooze into the milk  
and marble into mulattos, the cosmic race our parents would never want  
their grandchildren to become

she warned me of the biting ants, and oh how they stung  
our tender feet until she taught me to decorate the sidewalk  
with their innards, to stomp them like crabapples, splattering  
remorseless red and brown and death and flies until our parents  
taught us it was wrong to kill

she and I, we were always different. we threw tantrums about  
those blue plastic chairs, ostracized the wobbly one with the crack  
and she wept inconsolably when, on rare occasion, our parents  
rewarded me for my quiet with the intact throne and i always felt  
a little silly because deep down i always loved the underdog  
and knew she was too beautiful for anything less than ken

two little indian girls in white america  
dots on their heads, dots on their dresses  
their parents lost in this land where love flows  
in such foreign, unpredictable ways, which scrapes your knees raw  
as you beg for the familiarity you can only find in dressing up  
your dollfaced daughters in matching dresses  
each one more identical than the last

two little girls retaliated, never to don those dots again,  
vowed to be distinct, to perform their difference, and grew up into  
a cornbred feminist and a plantation belle who made their parents so proud  
and destroyed them in the worst of ways because america made us and ruined us

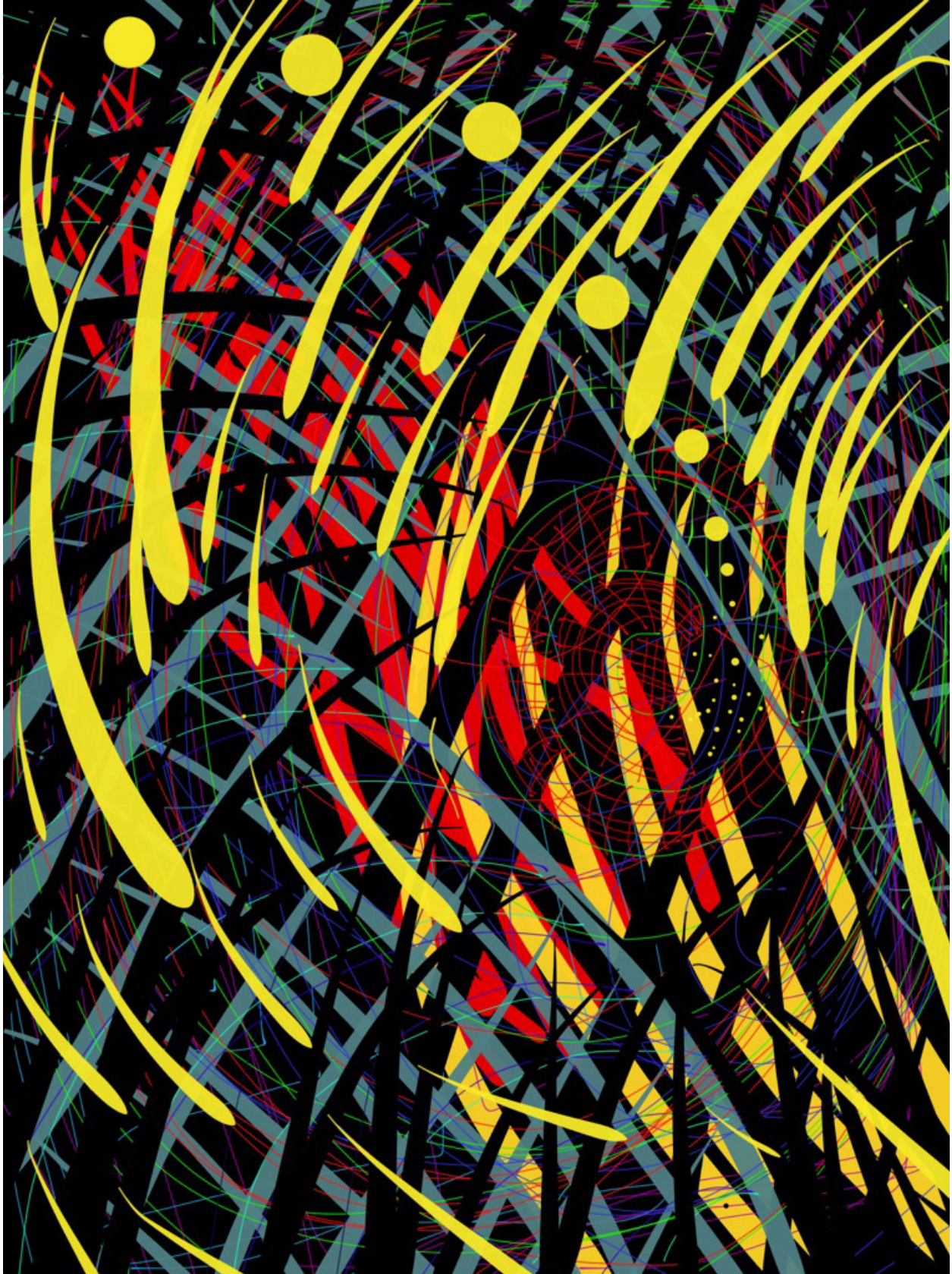
Night Market | Kailie Asam, MS in Deaf Education Program | *digital photography*







Meat | Jyoti Das, WUMS II | *digital photography*



#0312 | Robert Boston, WUSM Staff Photographer | *digital drawing*







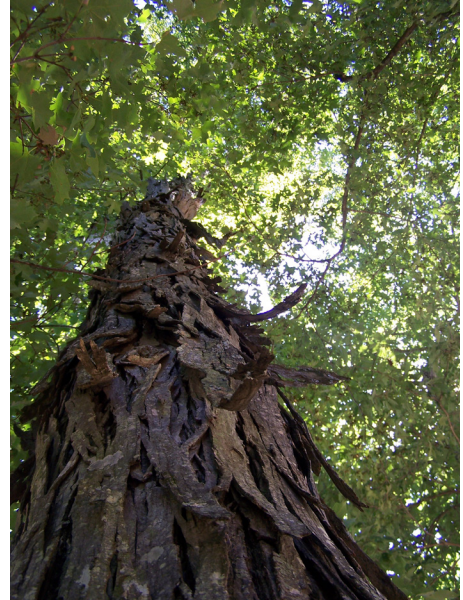
Golden Gate Bridge | Zhuchen Xu, WUMS I | *digital photography*



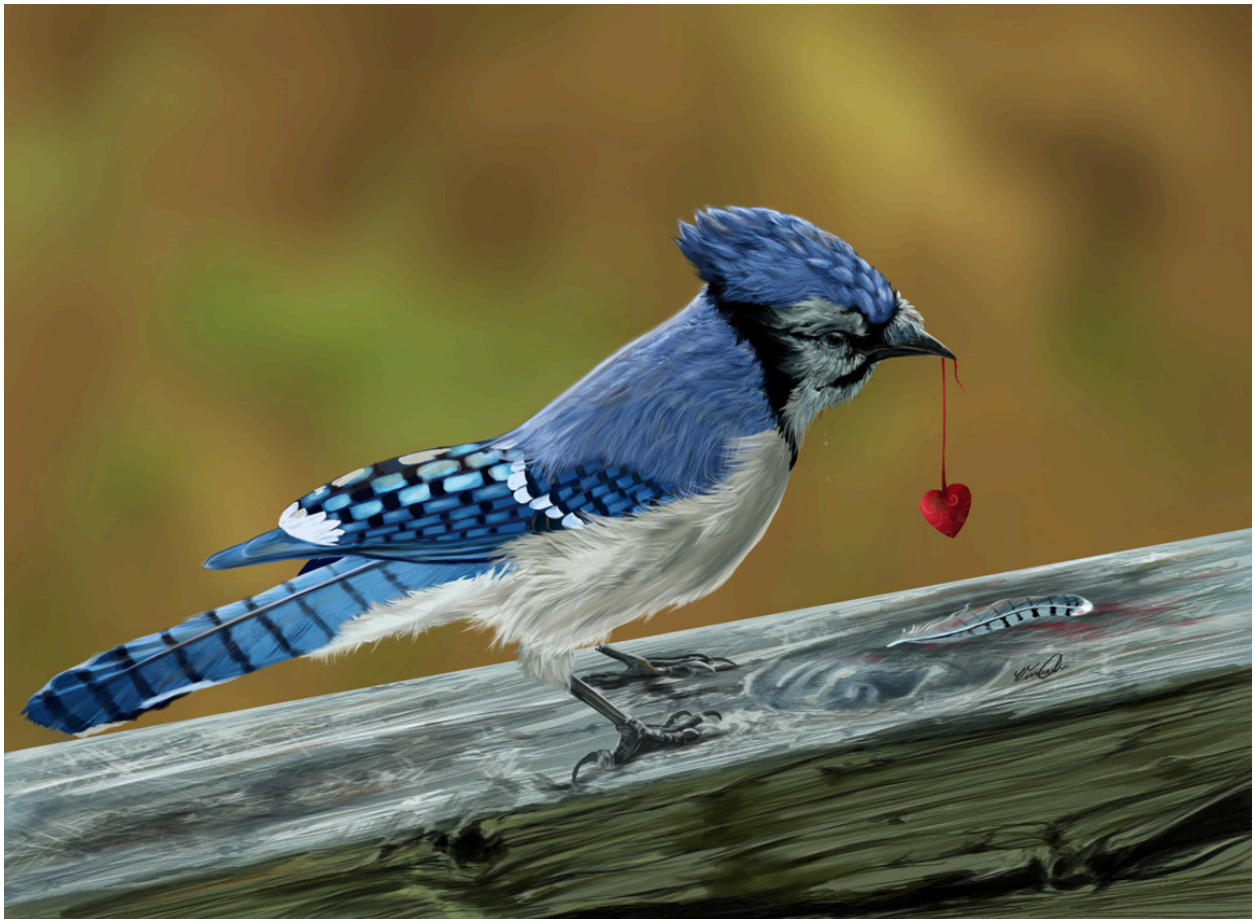
**Bratislava Castle and Skyline** | Zuzana Kocsisova, DBBS MGG Program | *cardstock cutout*



**White-crested elaenia** | Wayne Yokoyama, faculty in  
Department of Rheumatology & Internal Medicine |  
*digital photography*



**Shag Bark Giant** | Sally Vogt,  
Graduate Student Coordinator,  
DBBS | *digital photography*



**Undying Love** | Vivian (Tingying) Chi, WUMS II | *digital art*



**Hello Spring** | Elizabeth Pesch, MSOT/S 2016 | *digital photograph*

# You Let Me

When I turn your hand to hold the inside of your wrist  
you do not flinch,  
though you squirmed when your parents grabbed it before crossing the street, all those years walking  
to school;  
and your eyes grew wide that first time the person you loved slipped their fingers between yours,  
wrists touching bringing you perceptibly closer.

When I press two fingers firmly against your skin  
you do not blink,  
though that skin knows the worn plastic of your watchstrap, the inside of your coat, the cool metal  
of your laptop as you type,  
better than it knows a human touch.

When I tell you I am taking your pulse  
and look down to the seconds wiped away over and over,  
you let me.

We step into a stretch of silence together  
almost long enough to be awkward,  
except my fear of awkward silences is swallowed by the blood coursing at my fingertips—not mine  
but yours—and I hasten to count your heartbeat in seconds.  
It occurs to me that you are never really silent—  
that I will need to listen with more than just my ears.

We step into a stretch of rhythm together and you let me  
touch  
because you have entrusted me with the protection of this rhythm.  
The magnitude of your trust dwarfs the faint pressure in your wrist  
but they are inextricable.  
For these seconds, so are we.

Radhika Jain, WUMS I  
Submitted as an entry in the 2015 Alpha Omega Alpha Pharos Poetry Competition

Acantilados de Miraflores | Jared Goodman, WUSM MSTP II | *digital photography*





