

# Denali

Spring 2007



# DENALI

## Literary Arts Journal

A Student Production  
of  
Lane Community College

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&

All the students and community members  
continuing to support Denali by reading and submitting.  
You make this a community publication.  
Keep it up!

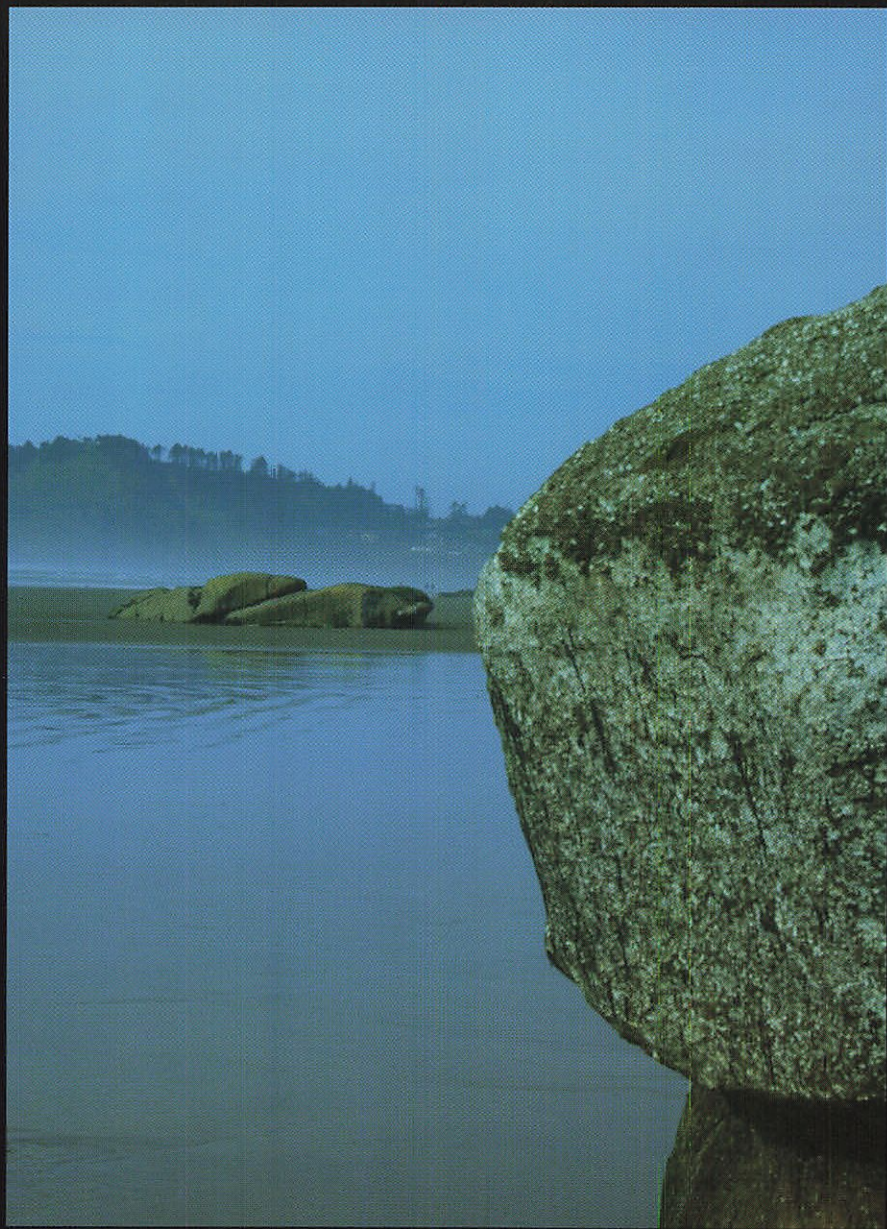


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Untitled  
Rik Cameron



*photography*



# Something for Nothing

Colin Cavasher

i remember roaring  
through thailand  
on a ridiculously small motorcycle,  
filled to the brim with wine  
and smoking like a bastard.

when the land is empty  
you rule the streets,  
and we burned through  
the dirt and detritus like convicts  
on the last leg of a dig out.

cloaked in youth and holding aloft  
wine bottles like  
swords; the problems of the  
taxpayers and working men  
that we'd soon have to return to  
felt like simple worlds to conquer.

i learned to avoid the dance bars  
and meat markets; techno music  
seemed to me to be  
propaganda of  
the mechanical and hormonally heartless.

generally, i ended up alone  
on the oceanfront with a bottle  
and glad for the fact that loneliness  
was pleasant and the only reminder of home.

the entire world, mine at least,  
was something for nothing;  
away from the tedium of deadlines and late  
fees, new haircuts and fashion magazines,  
looking over my shoulder towards home  
at the fools turning the screws ever tighter,  
i roared through and out of orange dust  
towns  
into the true dark  
of the jungle.

out there  
movement needs  
no explanation;  
there are no absolutes, for peculiarity is  
our breath and bread  
in this quiet land of homelessness  
and far off  
dead stars.

# You are an Artistic Engineer

Jose Castro

*Editor's Note:*

*The following poem was written by a Nicaraguan ESL student in honor of a U.S. mechanical engineer, Ben Linder, who was helping Nicaragua build an important dam when he was murdered by U.S.-backed contra-revolutionaries.*

*-LB*

Te vieron alegre haciendo bromas, ibas en la bicicletas sin manúbríos, las personas te quedaban viendo por tu gran habilidad y los niños gritaban de alegría al verte ir de un lado hacia otro. Eras un incansable con tu sonrisa, eras el señor de la sonrisa.

They saw you happy, making jokes; you rode a unicycle, people saw you for your talent and children screamed with joy when watching your tricks. Your smile was un-ending, you were The Man of Smiles.

Aprendiste en la vida, por eso la amabas, porque solamente aquél que ama la vida, puede ofrecerla a otro, despojarse de ella es difícil, porque solamente lo hacen aquellos puros de corazón. Por eso eres, el señor de la dulzura, del amor, de la ternura.

You learned in life, that's why you loved it, because only one who loves life can offer it to another. To leave it behind is difficult, only the pure of heart do it. That's why you are The Man of Sweetness, Love, Caring.

Estás en todos los caminos de nuestro pueblo, escuchándolo y viviendo la segunda vida juntos a ellos, dirigiéndolos sin que se den cuenta que tú los diriges.

You are in every path of our country, listening to it and living a second life with them, guiding them without them noticing.



Te vieron alegre haciendo bromas, ibas en la bicicletas sin manúbríos, las personas te quedaban viendo por tu gran habilidad y los niños gritaban de alegría al verte ir de un lado hacia otro. Eras un incansable con tu sonrisa, eras el señor de la sonrisa.

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You are in every path of our country, listening to it and living a second life with them, guiding them without them noticing.

Te levantas junto al sol, el canto de los pájaros es tu alegría, los colores del jardín, es tu rostro, es tu sonrisa. Andas en los caminos, alegre con tu bicicleta, divirtiéndolo a mi pueblo y sigues ayudándolo a construir la presa.

You get up with the sun, the song of the birds is your happiness, the colors of the garden is your face, is your smile. You ride the paths happy with your unicycle, entertaining my people and you continue to help us build the dam.

# Daddy's Girl

---

Felicia Espinoza

So proud to be  
Your princess.

Secret partner in the  
Battle against Mommy.

You're so nice, and you  
Let me do everything  
That Mommy won't.

I was so proud  
To be your favorite.

Still

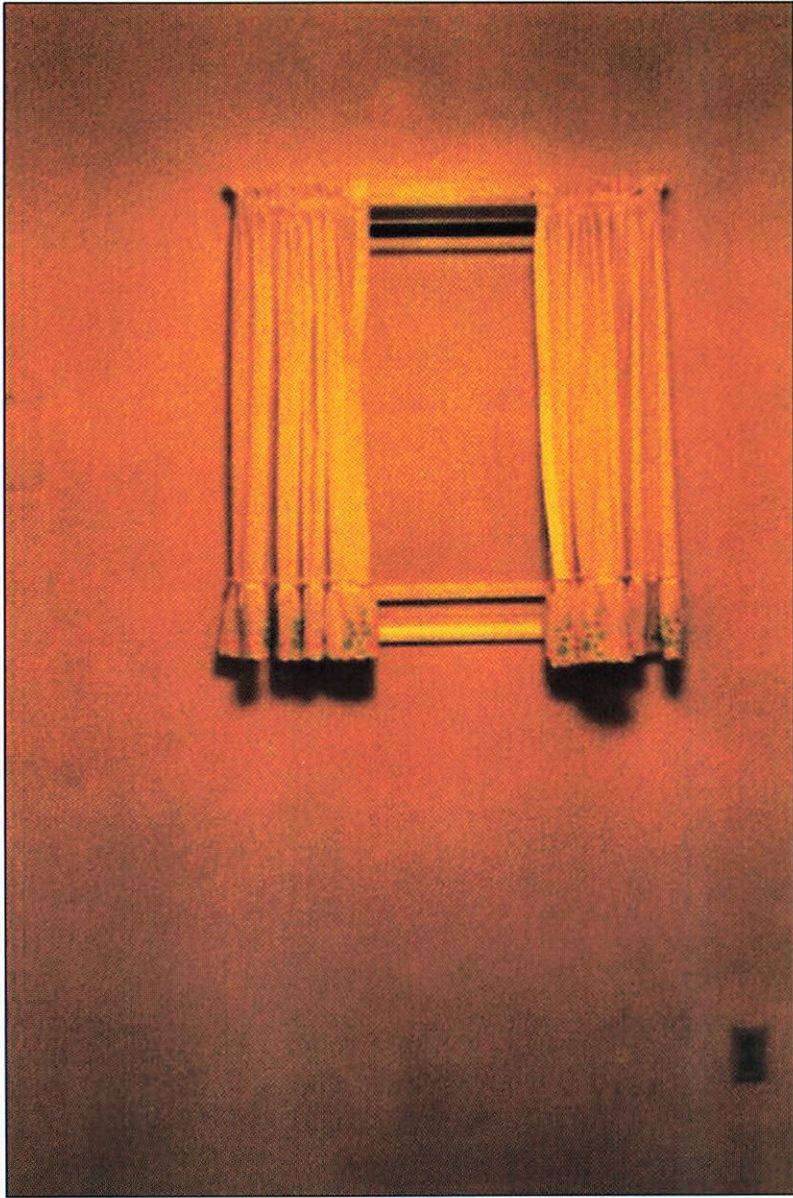
Couldn't you let me sleep?

Just one night without  
Your body, my blood  
My soul running away  
With my tears.

What a big job  
We small princesses  
Must endure.



Untitled  
Melissa Mankins



*photography*



Untitled  
Teresa Behlke







# The Red Maple is Still Standing

Michelle Maher

I raise my tears to the sun  
Feel the warmth on my cheeks  
And honor you

I hold a dried leaf from the red maple that I have saved  
Years now after your death  
Its texture is like worn leather but cracked

The Red Maple in the front yard was my favorite  
Its inside branch bowed low enough to sneak up and climb with ease  
And I could hear the fear in your voice when you beckoned me down.

It was the last of the four trees left standing  
I remember that you planted them in the 1930s  
In your young adulthood, so much still to come in your long life.

You lived to watch the other three fall from majesty  
Like eight of your ten siblings  
Marking their deaths like rings on the stumps of your interior

Your grief great in witnessing uncontrollable loss  
Like when the dogs mistakenly ate the weed poison you placed in the yard  
My father, your son, almost 60 now, still carries the sadness

When you recounted the story to me as a child  
I asked why you didn't get other dogs.  
It was "too much," you said.

I notice now, 20 years later, that you never replanted the trees  
once the stumps were removed, either.  
Maybe the recuperation is too great to risk again.

And yet how naïvely love risks as you opened your heart to me as a child.  
You too were as helpless to life's markings, just as subjected to the changing winds,  
and full of just as much love you couldn't help give.



Melvin  
Susie Morrill



*photography*

# Wearing My Armor

Fumiko Nute

I was waiting for a waiter with Liza, a lovely Russian girl with brilliant green eyes, in a fancy French restaurant at Euro-Disney. The French Disneyland was absolutely American. The immediate service with a big smile, the totally functional system, and the cleanliness - we both loved this dreamy place. Soon after, a waiter in a black coat appeared quietly at our table. He was old and dignified.

"Bonjour, Mesdemoiselles," he smiled at Liza. He started explaining about some recommendations of the day and asked Liza if we were ready to order. I felt an ominous intuition. He was all the time only facing Liza. Well, he probably thought Liza spoke French because she was Caucasian. She looked at me for some help because she couldn't speak French. I knew this was a weird sight that as an Asian, I spoke French, not the Caucasian, Liza. I hesitatingly gave our order in French to the waiter, who was still facing Liza. He was expressionlessly writing down the order and then said to Liza with a smile.

"Merci, Mesdemoiselles."

"Hey! I'm the one speaking to you!" Of course, I couldn't say that to him. "Again," I sighed.

This wasn't the first time in the three years I'd lived in Belgium that I was discriminated against just because I wasn't Caucasian. It was quite shocking every time I experienced discrimination, especially for someone coming from Japan, a racially homogeneous nation. Once I stepped out from my apartment, facing discrimination was everyday life in Belgium.

When I walked down a street, kids often shouted at me, "Chinese!"

Fine, they couldn't tell the difference between Japanese and Chinese. But they loved to point out the difference between Asians and Caucasians. In a shop, I was often ignored, like an invisible person. If I wasn't careful, my turn was often skipped at shops. Going to the office also made me depressed. For some colleagues, I was again invisible. Every time these incidents happened, I wasn't quick enough to say something, but I was stunned. I felt my existence was denied here. I might have been too sensitive to discrimination; even so I shouldn't always have these inhumane experiences in everyday life. As time passed, I was almost crushed down by repeatedly facing unexpected discrimination.

One bright Saturday evening in summer, I was invited to dinner at Madame Keiko's place. She married a Belgian, and had been living in Brussels for more than thirty years. She was one of a few brave Japanese living so long in Belgium. I told Madame Keiko about my distressful experiences. She opened her big eyes wide and gazed at me.

"Fumiko, don't just accept discrimination. Fight back! Wear your armor to be a warrior." She shrugged her shoulders, making it look like she was wearing armor. I drew back from her energetic power.



"Fight back?!" I weakly repeated.

"Yes, fight back!" She nodded her head.

Awhile after the conversation, when I was walking down a shopping street, a teenage boy was passing by and shouted at me,

"Jap!" Well done. He recognized me as Japanese. I was weirdly impressed.

"*Payan!*" ("Country Bumpkin!") I shouted back. He glanced back at me with an embarrassed look. I felt freshened up. After this day, my "fighting back" had started. It worked most of the time. I fought back to get a fair deal. At the same time, it made me exhausted to be in a constant state of war. I wasn't a tough warrior. I needed to have a cessation of hostilities. When I finally left Belgium, I pretty much hated everything in the country. Was it really like this to live in a foreign country after all? Where was the Declaration of Human Rights? The Belgians still seemed to be living in a kind of medieval society which was indicative of racial exclusion.

Now, here I am, in Eugene, where I am protected against discrimination by law.

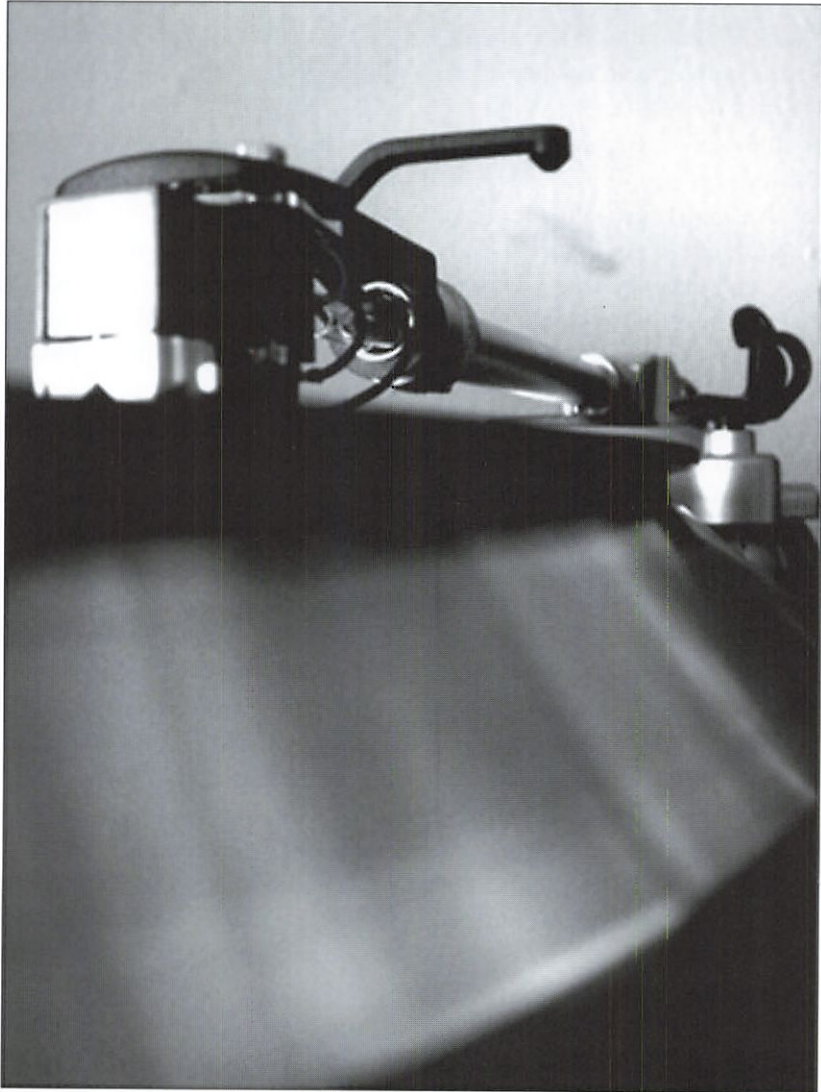
"Americans love to make laws for everything. It's uncomfortable to live here," many foreigners living in this country cynically say. In my situation, it is comfortable to live in a country like the United States that has control over discrimination. Nobody shouts at me "Chinese!" here, but "Hi!" with a big smile. In a shop, I sometimes feel extra attention given to me for not being skipped for my turn. Even if I'm not careful, someone will kindly tell me it's my turn. My armor is getting rusty here, and I feel it's really true, that we are all equal before the law.

I'm now in a kind of a truce here, in Eugene. The bitter experiences are fading away from my mind as time goes by. I am very peaceful, because I don't need to be armored all the time. To be honest, I didn't like to react to each incident. It left me with a bad taste in my mouth. Of course, there are some small incidents here too, but I pay no attention these days. I may have become a tougher warrior after living in Belgium.

As long as I live as a different race, complete avoidance of racial problems are almost impossible. I have no control over it. Although I can be passive against discrimination without talking back, now I know how to deal with it; I choose to wear my armor when necessary. I am still ready to wear my armor at any time here. I occasionally polish it, when I remember Madame Keiko's words. ❖

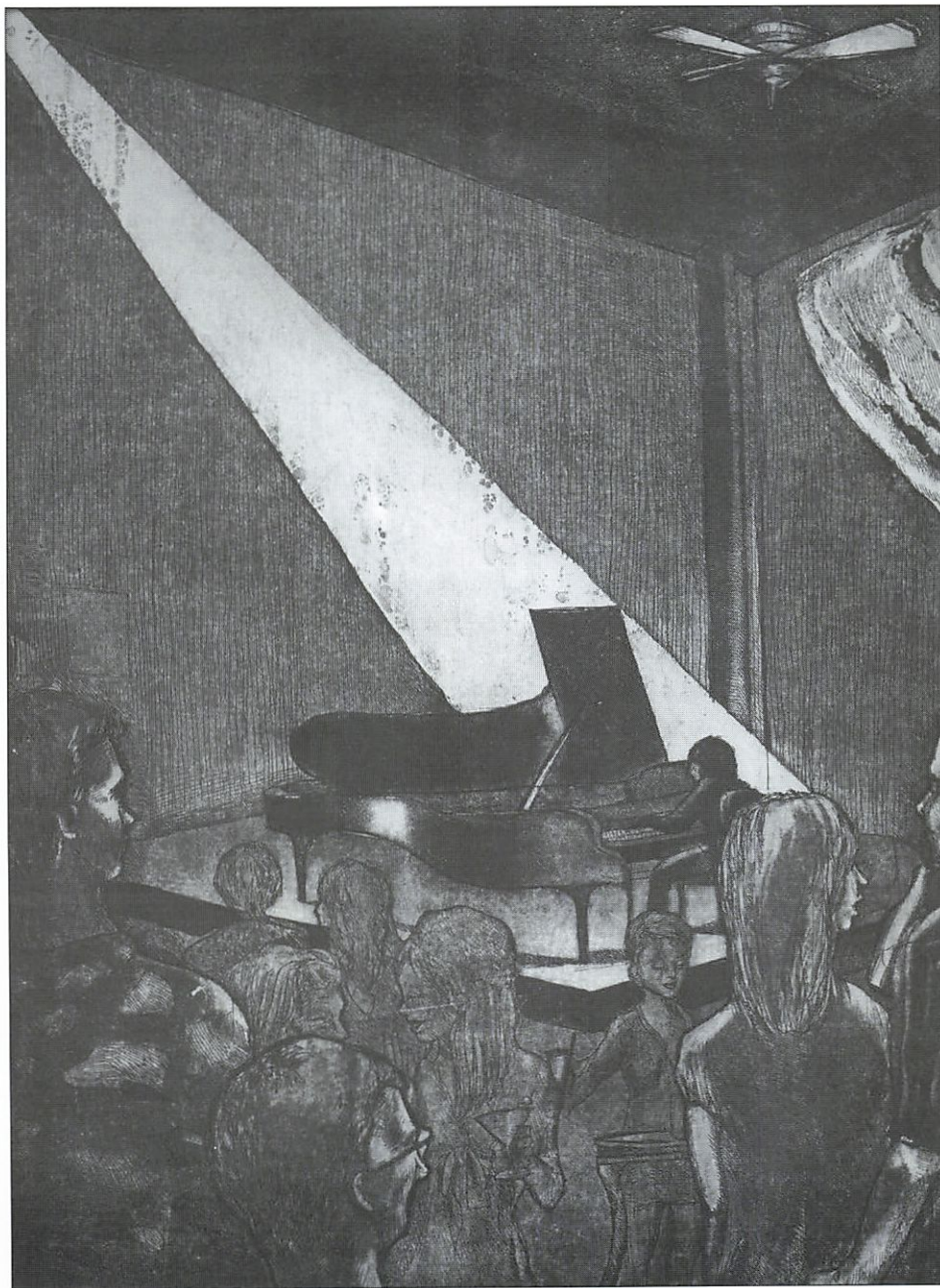


Turn  
Lander Beauchamp



*photography*

Piano Bar  
Yoshimi Moore



*intaglio print*

# To My Muse: December Trees

Lindsay Stalone

December trees quivering,  
jeweled by solstice light,  
blankets of leaves  
sun and moon simultaneous at sky's edge  
illuminate spider webs suspended above the path,  
like discovered fire,  
so we did not disturb them.

Countless blue-paned days I sat writing,  
in our room while you slept  
listened to your cadence:  
wondered what your dreams were  
when they made you shift  
shallow, soft, successive breaths  
giving way then long and deep and loose.  
Just once.

At the zenith of the night,  
you came in  
and talked and talked  
and made love  
and after dawn  
I would try to remember  
our conversations  
and write them down.



My hand pulls from the poem;  
you are too large to ink: to wash  
with images of waking and long withdrawals  
when logic gave out under a cacophony of hours, though  
I lay the colors down across morning.

The new wrinkles delta down around your eye,  
to bridge base, and draft your mouth.  
I slide and slide lips over that wrinkle  
and wonder when the first grey will appear,

cup the capacity of skull in hand,  
watch the cadence sleep, wait for shifting limbs,  
gather all of your sounds and silences into a vision to  
crystallize one image: this luminal language of space in sleep,  
this, just wild interpretation, is enough to bring me in.

Hands, body, breath wake me before bluish dawn,  
pull me closer to the interstice of hips,  
press my face into sweated chest  
and comfort my questioning,  
ceaseless questioning.

Empressive  
Ras Terms One



*mixed media*



Munin  
John Holdway



*two-color linoleum cut print*

# At the Writers' Group

Colin Cavasher

there are many excellent writers  
at the writers' group-  
they'll tell you about it,  
over  
and over again;

and how they were  
Born To Create  
and how people  
Just Do Not Understand Them.

their craft is flawless and perfect.

one of them writes poetry  
about her grandmother, and  
horses-  
    it rhymes;

another one writes semi-  
autobiographical work  
about times with his favorite  
uncle  
and how, after he died,  
he could never cry;  
one day he went back to the old house,  
and climbed  
the old tree  
and then the tears came,  
they finally came.

and another writes about  
an evil and always abusive,  
usually drunk  
man-  
    a father, an uncle, a boyfriend,  
or  
    a husband-  
who locked her in a cage,  
a cage with no key  
and she can't get out,  
she just  
can't get out.

and another writes  
and another writes  
and another writes  
more  
of the same.



they will ask you if you  
write  
and then  
quickly give you theirs-  
they never call it  
writing,  
they call it their Work.

they are all Geniuses,  
they See the Real Beauty,  
and will gladly tell you  
what you can do  
here and there,  
to,  
you know,  
fix things up a bit.

they Want To Help Others,  
to help YOU,  
not to help you Create,  
understand,  
but to help you understand  
their Creations.

and it's hard for me  
to feel their sunshine  
or whatever  
when  
i'm still reeling  
from much too much  
last night,  
and remembering with distaste  
the false faces of people in the  
bar,  
when even the drink cannot  
save them,  
and I, screeching out Love  
like a hammer  
to a girl who is wrong for me-  
they all are-  
while three thousand snakes  
crawl caked in oil  
up and out  
of my stomach  
to reswallow the words  
that were probably  
best left  
unsaid

My House  
Gen Schock



*photography*

# The Procedure

Jason Ader

While lying on the operating table, I'm so preoccupied with morbid thoughts about the impending procedure that I barely notice the nurse as she enters the room. The nurse, upon entering, is so absorbed in all of the minutia of her carefully choreographed routine that she barely notices me lying there.

As she jets about, mechanically performing her required tasks, I drift along the somnolent river of reverie. I float one week into the past, paddle over to a steep muddy embankment, and climb my way up onto dry ground.

I was at the bar with my friends. There were four of us sitting around a filthy lawn table in the smoking section outside. Somewhere in between the third and fourth pitcher of beer, our once raucous conversation morphed into a mournful lamentation. You see, one of our good friends had recently passed on. No, he didn't die; he met a fate much worse: Unintended Fatherhood.

"I haven't even seen him since it all happened," Sam said to no one in particular.

"I just saw him two days ago," Riley said, pausing to blow some acrid smoke from his tar stained wind-bags before continuing, "and he was driving a Mini-Van."

Silence instantly encircled the table.

"Well It's never going to happen to me," I blurted out, breaking the mute spell.

"But It could happen to any one of us," Lewis said, his voice nervous and paranoid, "that's what's so frightening about it – anyone can commit Domesticide."

"Not me," I replied with that cavalier certitude so conducive to beer consumption, "I'm gonna do what Dave did."

Riley looked at me with that wry smile of his, and said, "First of all, you've been saying you're gonna do that for years now, and secondly, you always seem to forget about what happened to Dave."

It was true. As soon as Dave had it done, he began to suffer from both depression and sexual-dysfunction. It took him months to get better.

"Well, I did some research and found out that what happened to Dave was one hundred percent psychological," I said. "It's mind over matter. And besides, I made the appointment earlier today. I go in next week."

The nurse towers above me, holding a razor in her gloved hand. A flash of light ricochets off the blade, meets my eye, and jolts me back into the present tense.

"I need to shave you," she says in a tin robotic voice. But before I have time to answer or comply, she yanks the sheet off of me like she's pulling a rug out from under someone. I immediately feel the cold air swoop in to attack my bare skin.



Looking up, I can see she's completely focused now: A pallid, steady face with prosaic, determined eyes. Her shoulder pivots, lifting the razor chest high. Poised, she brings the cold and intimidated target into her sights. Then . . . She plunges into the pre-op scrotal shave with the delicacy of a butcher scaling a dead fish. Thankfully, I can now feel the Valium I swallowed fifteen minutes ago beginning to take affect: warm, synthetic waves of euphoria melt over jagged, glacial surfaces.

"Okay, you're ready for the procedure now," she says. "The Doctor will be in shortly." She exits, shutting the door behind her with a vacuous hiss.

Alone with copious amounts of Valium in my veins, the room displays the full plume of its ominous character: Sanitized. Vapid. Lifeless.

Panic-stricken, I suddenly envision myself atop an altar. Seven naked, well-groomed eunuchs are slowly preparing to sacrifice me to the lesser known god of sterility. My thoughts bounce frenetically off the ceiling: I could leave right now. Just get up and get dressed and walk out of here. It's not too late to remain whole, intact, fully functioning. If I don't go through with this, it won't mean that I'll change my mind about having kids. I'd just know that if I wanted to, I could. No, I made this decision years ago. I don't want to risk making a mistake. I was a mistake. Maybe this is a mistake. No, it's better to be responsible about it. But what about . . .

CLIPAP! The door springs open with a loud crash, ending my neurological ping-pong match. It's the Doctor, and he's pushing in a stainless-steel tray containing various surgical instruments. He's young for a Doctor—maybe ten years older than me. I remember thinking this when I met him a few days ago, as well. His whole disposition now, as it was then, is very casual and laid back—almost aloof. I can tell he's wearing sneakers and jeans under his white frock-coat.

"How's it goin' today?" He asks.

"Fine. A little nervous," I answer.

"It's a piece a cake," he assures me. "With the technique I'll be usin' today, you'll be outta here in ten minutes."

I look up at him puzzled.

"It was developed by the Chinese," he explains, "and if there's any one group of people who know how to do this right, it's the Chinese."

"Why's that?" I ask.

"Because of their strict population laws, millions of men get them every year. They had to develop a quick and efficient technique. It's a conveyor-belt style operation over there. They don't even use anaesthetic because it's too time consuming. Quite brilliant, really."

He sees me cringe in despair.

"But don't worry. I use plenty of anaesthetic. You shouldn't feel a thing." With that, he waists no time getting started. "Okay, here comes the shot of Lidocaine."

I make up my mind to not look down from this point on. I'm glued to the ceiling tiles as the needle makes its subcutaneous entry. It deposits its contents and my groin feels as if it's being stomped into my stomach by a boot made of frozen sludge. When the stomping finally ceases, the most familiar part of my body is a complete stranger to me. An image flashes in my mind of a half-deflated mylar balloon, nine days old, laying on a dirty floor. Get Well Soon.

Next, I feel, or rather intuit, some faint tugging followed by a distinct snipping sound. My genetic ties to the primordial past and evolutionary future have been severed. Don't look down don't look down. I hear a sizzling sound, like frying bacon.

Then the smell hits my nostrils: That's not bacon that's human flesh my flesh is burning don't look down.

"Okay, that's it. You're done." I look down. The Doctor is wrapping up my self-elected injury. There's very little blood and I'm surprised that it really did only take a few minutes.

"Ice it, ice it, ice it," he says, as I slowly maneuver down from the operating table and into my clothes. "Stay off your feet for a few days; don't go jogging anytime soon; and stay out of hot-tubs and bath-tubs for a week."

He hands me some after-care information, looks at his wristwatch, and takes off speed-walking down the hall. ❖



# Treasure

Paige Lehmann

I.

Treasure hunting  
in a washed-out  
beach  
looking for  
rings and  
crystals  
and all I found was  
a rusty fork.

II.

Great Light bulb  
in the sand,  
upright to the waves,  
no electricity lines  
run along the edge  
only memories  
of lost ships

III.

Is this the tooth  
of a giant whale?  
no, another rock.

IV.

Speak to me  
softly  
sand angels  
and Titan  
with his wings

V.

gold! gold! gold!  
where is it?

VI.

This broken toilet  
was also  
made in Italy

VII.

Abandoned clothes  
and multi-colored  
umbrella  
and web-prints of the albatross  
that lead to Icarus fallen.

VIII.

The best time  
to hunt for shells  
is after a storm  
the best time for  
sassoli is  
in the winter  
the best time for friends  
is when the bombs fall

IX.

gold!

# Inquisitive Minds

Hayley Farr



*photography*

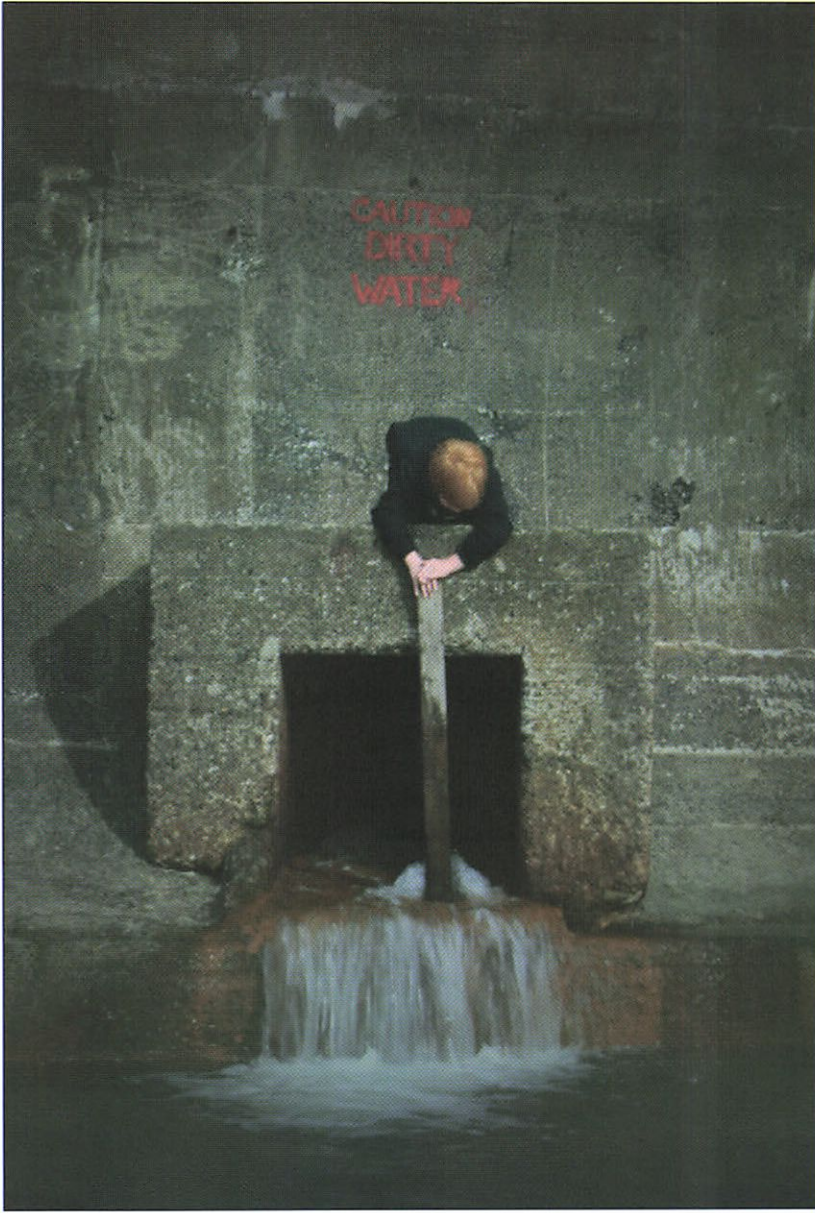


Untitled  
Lucas Baxter



*photography*

City Life  
Rik Cameron



*photography*



# Bukowski

Lindsay Stalone

Poem on the wall of this gutted building.  
I stopped to take pictures of jaws eating  
concrete, rebar, the building, alive,  
huge rumbling and crunching across from  
our library, half a block of brick,  
it must have shuddered in empathy  
at the wreck going down.

There, above blown out windows and  
showcase-sidewalk awning  
a liberated hand,  
a mutant genius,  
some secret poet,  
had scrawled  
Bukowski's  
Bluebird

The next evening the wreck had gone down.  
I walked along the fence  
shocked at the speed of decay  
taking photos of the rubble,  
sunset coming in sideways

the wall fell inwards  
to expose the underside  
and hide the rest.  
I found this one piece  
of the whole red wall  
with a poem scrawled

Untitled  
Lacy Ward



*photography*

## Sacrifice

Ron Burley

With bare hands, Elena Povitz wiped away frost from the chill window. Across the alley, beyond the wall, a gritty train pulled into Warsaw station. A dozen dingy rail cars trailed behind the single locomotive. The Yiddisha newspaper, along with announcing its own demise, had quietly revealed that this would be the last train. After today, all would be gone from the ghetto.

The train had appeared twice a week for the last month. At first, it spirited away only the old, sick and weak. Then the strong were taken, including Elena's husband Stephan, leaving only the women and children. The newspaper had said the trains took the Jews to factories in the East, to build tanks and airplanes. It was not believed. What could an old woman do to build a tank? Snow fell as two platoons of SA Brown Shirts lined up in front of the railway station. Elena stepped back from the window. The tiny apartment held only a mattress and a chamber pot. Everything else had been sold for food or burned for heat. Her six-year old daughter, Freta, sat in the middle of the lumpy mattress, wrapped in a tattered blanket, reading the only book they had not burned.

The golden-haired girl looked up at her mother. "Why did the evil witch eat poor Hansel and Gretel?" Her breath was like smoke.

Elena's throat tightened. Tears welled-up in her eyes. She turned away. "Evil is its own reason. It is cruel like the Winter."

She kneeled down on the mattress and pulled her daughter close. Freta's hair smelled of the last of their fine Dutch soap. "*Mój córka*." My daughter. "It is time to go."

She helped Freta into a threadbare coat and stuffed the remnants of the newspaper into the gaps to help keep the child warm. As she pushed her adult gloves onto the girl's small hands, a siren sounded in the distance. The Brown Shirts would be coming soon.

By candlelight, Elena led her daughter down creaking wooden stairs into the basement. It reeked of mold, spilled fuel oil and old garbage. In the space behind the boiler, she removed three bricks from the bottom of the wall. The hole was barely big enough for the child to crawl through.

"Go into your brick house, my wise little piggy," Elena coaxed.

Shouting voices echoed from the street. Freta looked up into her mother's eyes.

"We are not playing this time, no mama?"

"No, child. Not this time. Do as we talked. Light the candles. Drink the water. Eat the food. Stay there until you have turned the hourglass one-hundred times. Only then can you come out."

"Then I will crawl underneath the big wall."

"Yes, only then. And you will say you are a Catholic and that your parents were killed in the bombing."



# If These Hands Could Speak

Caleb Epstein



*photography*

"I will mama. Then you will come back?"

Fists pounded the street level door. Elena lifted her daughter into her arms, pulled her to her chest and kissed her forehead. "I will always be with you. I will always be in your heart. *Kocham was.*" I will always love you. She wanted to say more, but she could not speak.

She lowered Freta to the floor. Dust rained down as boots entered the hallway above them.

"I love you mama," were the last words Elena heard as she replaced the bricks.

"Ssshhhh." Elena pushed dirt into the cracks. She picked up the candle and climbed out from behind the boiler.

I leave my future behind me. She was on the first step when the light appeared at the top of the stairs. ❧

# Supplication

J. Alexander

I don't use words  
to pray,

anymore.

The palsy of dwindling  
muscle is more articulate than

*Almighty, maker  
of heaven and earth, of all  
that is, seen  
and unseen.*

What are words,  
fumbling and slurred,

*resurrection  
of the dead  
and the life  
of the world to come*

next to a spasm,

its rhythm hard  
and clear?

The crackle of my nerves  
as they leave  
this world never lies.

Each percussive tremor  
speaks:

*tensed hamstrings* (Please God,)

*shaking hands* (any other way,)

*pulsing flesh* (not this-)



Deliver Us...

Shelley McKeithen



*acrylic and mixed media*



# Lashes

Brandon Kitajchuk



*photography*

# Denali

Spring 2007

Cover: "Green," pen and ink on dyed paper, by Amrita Dutia

Inside Front Cover: "The Gentleman, Languid," pen and ink, by Melissa Murray

Inside Back Cover: "The TumTum Tree," pen and ink, by Melissa Murray



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