

# HIPPOCRENE

Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis | 2016



**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 supporting the Hippocrene and the arts in all its forms within our community.

Editor: Zhuchen Xu

Cover image: Jooyoung Park



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.

BARNES JEWISH  
*Hospital*



*“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”*  
— *Pablo Picasso*

# Hippocrene

Samuel Brunwasser / 06

Anita Chary / 08

Mayank Choudhary / 09

Dean Odegard / 10

Jooyoung Park / 12

Tirth Patel / 14

Lyndsey Patterson / 16

Shuxiang Ruan / 17

Tim Supakorndej / 19

Chris Tricario / 22

Sally Vogt / 23

Austin Wesevich / 24

Pat Winkler / 26

Zhuchen Xu / 27

## Resection

Every Friday we'd break  
the bread and light the candles  
and I'd watch the melting wax  
slide anxiously slow,

with a trail in its footsteps  
accumulating on the candlestick;  
a visible marker of  
the excruciating passage of time,

As if it was trapped  
in a state of uncertain stasis;  
as if it was the week between  
colonoscopy and biopsy results.

The candle would burn all night,  
long past our bedtimes.  
But my father always stayed up.  
Watching.  
Burning.  
Left alone with his fire.

Maybe he wanted to see what it looked like -  
the substance that torched  
his insides  
for so many years.

But only the baker sees the dough.  
And although she does a fine job  
removing the charred segments,  
the truth remains inside:

He was sliced like a pie.  
First into quarters,  
then eighths.

And so on until all  
that was left was crumbs.

Last Friday he took me  
to the airport a little too early,  
and I said my goodbyes.  
But I wish more than anything  
that I had stayed  
for that extra half hour.

Because they taught us in grade school  
that fire isn't material.  
It's a visible marker of  
a rapid and violent release of heat.  
Fire is an absence.  
And I left him in the terminal.  
Watching and burning.  
Alone with his fire.

Samuel Brunwasser / MSTP

## The Coffee Table and the Maple Tree

On the edge of our seats, worn cushions the only furniture in an otherwise empty room, we eat out of politeness. The coconut is pleasant and familiar, the fried tapioca novel. My tongue puzzles over the flavor, the texture, as I study her hair, a little unkempt, her glasses, thick-framed, and her face, at once vibrant and sullen, at once aged and youthful. She is seventy years of life, seventy years of wisdom one only attains by embracing the bad cards she was dealt.

Feisty. She was always feisty. I scan my memories and find her standing at a table of sweets, years ago, after much of the crowd had left celebrations for navratri, the Hindu festival for the goddesses. She eyed the desserts one by one, glanced at my mother and me conspicuously, and, settling on a cashew-flavored delight, proclaimed, "To hell with diabetes!"

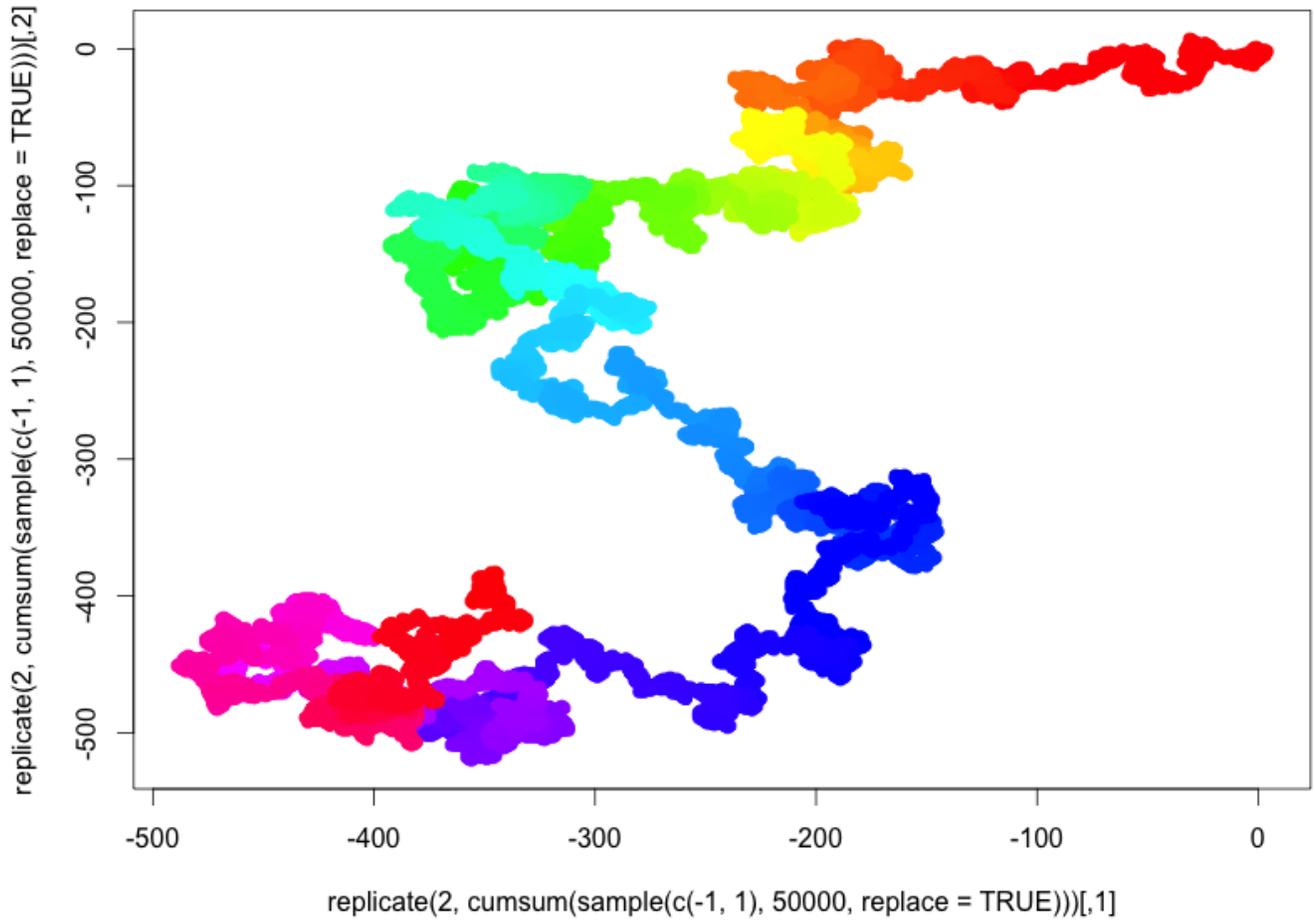
I admired her spirit. I still do.

Her husband is quiet. He always has been, lost in proofs and theorems, planning out his next lecture, conjuring and solving problems in that professorial way. She knows that we know his silence today is not scholarly contemplation, but a departure from a former self. He asked for our names not because he has not seen us in years, but because he does not remember who we are.

We hear the story of her life as bricolage. One moment, her mother is widowed young by her father who never took his medicines. One moment, she has congestive heart failure and 57% lung function. One moment, her eighteen-year-old self is married and finds herself in a new land, a new era. One moment, her brother has invited them to spend the rest of their days in California, but she would miss the seasons too much, the life spurting from the trees as the dead of winter gives way to the marvel of spring. It wouldn't feel like Christmastime, she says, under sunshine and palm trees. It remains unspoken that he gets lost walking in the neighborhood where they have spent the last fifty years.

They are selling the house and moving to India. There is a Chinese saying, she tells us, about the fallen leaves returning to their roots. She can't remember quite how it goes, but she gazes out to the patient maple tree in the front yard, and we all can picture its leaves yellowing and browning in the fall, drifting downwards, and laying themselves to their final rest on the ground, where they will disintegrate and find their way to the trunk's tentacles below.

They planted that tree together forty-two years ago, she says proudly, when they first bought this home. I imagine the young couple, he with a full head of hair and she hoping for the children they would never have, with shovels and a sapling. Forty-two rings of tree trunk later, I imagine that every nook and cranny of the house, every floorboard, every piece of furniture, including the ones we are about to load into the car today, has its own story.



Mayank Choudhary / DBBS



**In Foggy Old Brentwood / Dean Odegard / WUMS**



**Hawthorne** / Dean Odegard / WUMS



Jooyoung Park / DBBS





*Alive at Night / Tirth Patel / MSTP*



**Elan / Tirth Patel / MSTP**



**Dachstein, Austria** / Lyndsey Patterson / Occupational Therapy



**Sunset at Walden** / Shuxiang Ruan / DBBS



**Sunset at Walden** / Shuxiang Ruan / DBBS



**Trillium Lake Sunrise** / Tim Supakorndej / MSTP





**Joshua Trees at Sunset** / Tim Supakorndej / MSTP

## Coming Back to Life

They say the first cut is the deepest,  
And I would've believed it too,  
But when we made that first cut you were merely a tool.  
Real body parts just like the textbook highlighted  
Names and knowable things to whet our curious appetites.

But then we slid off your mask  
And revealed your face.  
Unscarred.  
Nameless.  
Lifeless.  
But suddenly more human than anyone I'd seen before.  
Uniquely you but somehow everyone else I had ever met.  
And then we made that cut,  
And I caught myself holding your hand.

Then we opened up your skull and I knew from the start  
That I held 100 billion neurons, that had connected your eyes, ears, and heart.  
And while the conversation it held with yourself had long since faded,  
The connections that made you, were still there, just vacated;  
Shaped by countless dramas played out 365 days per year,  
With the power to make certain chosen futures appear.  
And while I tried to study the folds and the lobes,  
I couldn't help but wonder if I was touching where one of your loved ones used to live.

As class came to a close I realized you'd soon be dust,  
With nothing left but memories, and lives you had the power to touch.  
So I guess everyone dies  
But these donors don't cease to exist.  
Because we'll take what we learned  
And pay forward their gift.



**Doe in the Yard** / Sally Vogt / DBBS

## Chicken & Chips

When we first arrived at Lake of Stars, Malawi's biggest concert event of the year, my roommates wanted to get food, so we bought chicken and chips at the makeshift food court outside the concert complex entrance. This was a series of hot griddles and tourist trinket stands, designed to get you to spend money before you were in the sponsored, wristband-only section. These wristbands went for more kwacha than most of the locals could afford - the concert highlighted wealth disparity simply in its existence.

Chicken and chips is a classic meal here. Potatoes are wedged and cuts of chicken fried until hot and delicious. Each stand had its own griddle and pot of oil, ready to cook sumptuous meals and accompany them with cold, green Carlsberg bottles. This food court was established just for the weekend, to satiate the rich people in town for the concert, but it was outside the wristband-only area. Thus, the local children were there in throngs.

It is unclear whether they were sent by their parents or were drawn by the novelty, but they were certainly present outside the concert venue gates. The children were all barefoot, in torn clothes varying in shade due to the tie-dye pattern of dirt and grime that permeated both clothes and skin. The boys would walk in groups, carrying small plastic bottles and closely following white patrons. Sometimes there would be a "Hello" or "How are you?"

These rote English phrases rang out in my ears as so foreign, so forced, yet more welcome than the increasingly common "Give me money." I wanted to respond to you, dear children, "Bo bo, waswera bwanji?". I live here, I've learned some Chichewa, I'm not like those other azungus. I'm not like the couple that stands there with a handful of sweets handing them out piece-by-piece thinking they are doing good, but instead inciting you to quickly group together and fight over the free treats. I notice all of you swarming like the fish at the zoo that overwhelm the real estate just beside the bridge, fighting for those quarter-a-handful food pellets. I would never just toss the container with the remaining treats into the swarm then walk away as you push, pull, hit, and fight over them, believing I had done you some good deed and not realizing that I should have just treated you with human dignity and greeted you warmly. Yet I watch that couple laugh to themselves, walking off in good spirits. The disparity is palpable.

We get our chicken and chips, a big juicy chicken breast and a couple drumsticks laid upon a pile of delicious fried potatoes, and find a plastic table with four plastic chairs. This makeshift food court even has our dining pleasure in mind! As we sit, the tattered shirts and sullen eyes start to surround us. They peer closer and closer at our plates, encircle us. This body language is universal. There's a deep desire that we can feel, taste, and touch, even if our backs are to them.

In almost desperation, to ease the mounting tension growing at the table, I turn around and begin to ask questions in Chichewa, "Dzina lako ndani?" They gradually reciprocate one-by-one with their names, but the chicken is intoxicating. Their eyes meet mine momentarily before looking over my shoulder at the plates hot with food. The string of discomfort is pulled tighter and tighter until it finally snaps. The half-eaten chicken breast is now in the hands of the persistent children. Eating was too painful as their eyes longingly locked onto that object of desire.

They are like dogs or vultures going in circles, waiting for the privileged lions to leave them some scraps. The metaphor becomes all too real when we allow one of them to grab two chicken bones off the plate, and he runs off with them, having secured a special snack. The drumstick bones that might be tossed off the table

for the family dog to munch on are quickly snatched by a sweet child. Is he starving? Is he ashamed? Or does poverty numb any embarrassment?

The food is gone, but the green bottles remain. Dollar signs now gloss over their eyes, green for the bottles. But there isn't enough chicken and empty bottles for all of them. The bigger fish come closer to receive the bottles, returning them to the food stands for the 10-cent deposit, while the smaller remain tattered. The stares never cease. Why can't we give them more?

Our wristbands give us an escape route. We hurry to the concert venue and try to forget, but we can't. Eyes are still staring, right through the straw fence.

Austin Wesevich / WUMS



**Stadium Seats** / Austin Wesevich / WUMS

# December Snowfall

I watched the snow today --  
floating in dizzy, dashing patterns through the cold,  
and heard the music of the season --  
soft and low, some distant harmony.

December plays a sad Christmas carol.  
But it's hard to hear over jingling bells  
and cries of merchants pushing fabricated joy  
wrapped in cellophane and sales.

I'd rather have the trashy treasures  
in a little boy's dirty pocket  
than all their glittery gifts.  
At least they know the love of one small hand.

---

I saw the shoppers today --  
running in dizzy, dashing patterns through the cold;  
and heard the sounds of the city --  
harsh and loud, complete discord.

Even the little drummer boy  
who played so humbly at Christ's cradle  
now marches to the beat of war drums --  
or lies forgotten in the cold.

How can we read a poem for two thousand years  
and still not understand? But even now,  
not understanding we turn away in fear --  
or anger -- from Christ's redeeming gift.

---

And so, the snowflakes fall  
in dizzy, dashing patterns through the cold.  
And, in the cradle of a warm hand,  
they vanish, silently.

*This was written in about 1966 when I was sixteen and the Viet Nam war dominated everyone's thoughts but sadly it still seems to apply.*

Patricia Winkler / Department of Genetics



Zhuchen Xu / WUMS

# HIPPOCRENE

Washington University  
School of Medicine in St. Louis

Issue: 2016

*literary & visual arts*