HUMANITAS
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“I don’t like being surrounded by people who say yes. I think that creativity grows out from conflict.”

- Lee Alexander McQueen (17 March 1969 – 11 February 2010)

The world we live in and the many realities we may face can appear so incredibly complex that at times it would seem as humans we nearly drive ourselves mad attempting to trivialize or simplify. Or perhaps the converse is true for you, that something so arbitrary can somehow seem like a hulking inconvenience. Yet what has also occurred to me is that out of this attempt to embrace life’s intricacies while simultaneously appreciating “the little things,” both artistic and literary expression may be achieved by an individual who is willing and able to take a closer look at her or his perceptions. The works that lie ahead of you within these pages represent and celebrate what can be sensed but is not always seen, and what unites us all as emotive beings.

I appreciate anyone who has ever read, submitted to, or even talked about Humanitas. Thank you for being you. I would like to thank Drs. Steven Kubalak and Lisa Kerr for their guidance and support in every aspect of the publication process these past few years. I can safely say that we have had fun! This publication would also not be possible without graphic designer, Thomas Hamm; thank you for your work. I thank the Student Editorial Board for their time, interests, and input. Also, a special thanks to the MUSC Presidential and Provost office for their ongoing support. Finally, I would like to thank all members of the MUSC and MUHA community for four years of education and life lessons. Humanitas will always strive to celebrate diversity, and change what is possible.

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INTERVIEW IN THE SWAMPLANDS
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This particular scene was taken in “Old Bryce” Insane Asylum in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The subject longingly stares at the heart depicted on the wall while a cross remains in the discharge led window frame.

The shape of the heart is mirrored by the shape formed by the subject’s torso. The position of the subject’s head and arms held closely wrapped around her torso convey a feeling of discontent and withdrawal from reality; however, she shows hope for the future.

The surrounding scene symbolizes the mortality of manmade structures and agendas while love and faith persist allowing a foundation for the future.
PAWNS AND KINGS

Mohammed Alzubaidi
Clinical Fellow, College of Medicine

NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE MOUSE INNER EAR NERVE

Hanan Lang | Faculty, College of Medicine
above molten oceans
continental skin shifts,
drifts slowly, imperceptibly,
perpetually shuffling the terrain
your fingertips mapped.

there were no earthquakes
to speak of; no
clean breaks to
measure and compare.
just untethered floating,
languid in the face of loss.

at the junction of unyielding
landmasses, i anchor my heart
with rusty resolve.
undetectable pressure forces
plateaus together; subtle violence
that buckles and creases.

if ever you choose to return,
to reclaim the conquered colonies
left on feathered eyelashes and in
cratered dimples,
i will turn away.
leave you with the crooked range
of my spine,
reaching
even as it crumbles.
When it comes to healing patients who are suffering, we dramatically undervalue our power if we only apply the
genius of our technology. What modern medicine does best is treat acute disease and trauma; what it does least well
is treat chronic diseases. To deal with chronic disease you have to touch patients with more than just instruments you
must touch them with your heart.        – Carl Hammerschlag, MD

Her name was written on a sheet of paper; her only vital sign was a blood pressure. She had come on a bus
from her home with 55 other people to see the American doctor for depression. The stroke had left her without
voice for 2 years and she did not eat well. She sat silently in a congested, noisy church room waiting to be seen.
She was 74 years old. A hard life those years must have been. Wrinkled, sun worn hands, stiff and warped joints
testified to that. She sat alone amidst the crowd.

As her daughter poured out her heart, mine poured out as well. I had nothing to offer her. No medicine, no tests.
So different than the medicine of the university emergency department back home. I listened to her lungs and
then her heart, though I could not hear anything over the crowd of people surrounding us. Even if I could, it
would not make a difference.

I knelt beside her and rested my hand on her shoulder. Her lowered eyes rose to meet mine. I smiled, prayed and
said, “God Bless You.” The translator spoke those words in her language, but he need not have. She understood
and heard them from my heart. She opened her lips and spoke words back to me. I will not ever know what she
said, but those were the first words she had spoken in years.

I recently returned from a mission trip to South America—my first ever. And, it changed my perspective on life and on
medicine. So out of my comfort zone, I felt I had nothing to offer most of the 760 patients we saw in 4 days. I did not
have a lab, xray, most medications, and certainly no advanced technology. Most of the time, I only had words to offer.
I was reminded through these patients that kindness is exactly what is needed for treatment. And sometimes, that is the
only thing needed. The patient I write about is an interaction that I will never forget.
A GRAY DAY AT HUNTING ISLAND
Ricky Harrell | Faculty, College of Dentistry

MORRIS ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
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DESERT CARP
Hope Friar | Staff, OCIO
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Harry Rockower | Student, College of Medicine

ANOTHER VICTORY AT ‘THE JOE’
Grace Dion | Student, College of Medicine
While you were gone
convinced Susan to fly from the roof
her arm split like a screen door
snapped in two.
Told you it was cartwheels
you believed us.
Smoked pot under the trampoline
with Jamie’s older brother
and got high all Summer.
You were out with your boyfriend
pretending sleepovers every night.
Tried not to hear you through the walls.
Swam in the canal with the snakes
Junior went under
didn’t come back up
until the hills swallowed the sun and someone found him
tangled in the roots
a spider’s forgotten prey.
Tried to say sorry but
you just sat on the porch
smoking a cigarette
mascara bleeding.

There were no planes in the sky.
Watched people tumble
the hundred-and-first
a melted prison
the superstructure crumbled like
children’s building blocks.
You came home and microwaved dinner
while we watched
and watched
and watched.
While you were gone
never came back
and we moved on.

By seven a.m. the air units above Doughty street
were already churning hot air out into the steam of early July.
rising over the uneven brick of Calhoun as patients pulled suitcase wheels
and their families still cold and stiff from motel room window units smoked cigarettes on
empty stomachs full of fear.
Hot air rose against the nervous staccato of night crickets that died one by one
and handed over the anxious drumbeat of summer nausea
to the low turbid rolling growl of big steel boxes blowing air.
Inside they oozed cold air from ceiling vents rattling against stained drywall;
They numbed the hands of surgeons pulling yellow stained bodies taut with black vicryl,
But didn’t stop plastic tubes from pulsing and furling and plopping over
under the warm weight of human blood.
Downtown housewives had not yet risen for yoga and carpool, and already
rotten Chevy Blazers were parked along Jonathan Lucas,
families waiting, bleary-eyed, smoking, drinking nutty coffee from Styrofoam
pulled from off-brand gas stations along 26.
No, it was not yet seven o’clock in the morning, and already
ketchup-stained air heavy with grease floated up from the cafeteria, into the ORs,
where it rose with burning flesh and blood ballooning in dark stains on blue drapes,
into the air supply, and out into the thick choking pink sulfur of early morning,
carried out past Calhoun, then Lockwood, then over the bathy lapping water,
where human synchrony boils and festers, sitting thickly and still above the mud,
breaking and dissolving when the breeze blows it through the marsh grass.

I aimed to capture the summer morning moment when the
simultaneity of human suffering, gritty hospital work, and rising heat is palpable, and to connect this moment to the fecundity
and repetition of the tide that echoes and cleanses it.
RIVER BED
Siobhan Hansen  |  Staff, Operations

We watched for horseshoe crabs as we ran across the muddy tall-grassed marsh.

In the river we swam against the current mindful not to get carried away.

The clouds tankering by, the sun heating the water warm.

When the tide was low
There was only mud

Sinking up to my knees in sludge I slog through the river bed just to feel the cool wet mud that will dry on my legs in the sun like a second skin.

INTERVIEW IN THE SWAMPLANDS
Norvel Wellington Brown  |  Student, College of Medicine

Could we have predicted this towering wave to Trump our best barricades? Could we’ve seen the gangrene under their nails? Trusted the tingling in our toes?

Or known how the brackish water would climb the trees like angry animals; how it would rise under rainbows that had lasted for years or more—now fading to a mist uncertain?

Could we’ve foreseen the monuments in the mangrove being built; how they’d stand in an eerie pause, pregnant with purpose and a fungus at their feet shaded under these shrines of phobias unreal?

Or maybe we knew the land would be wet with weeds. Knew the stench and moss would mushroom on a ground damp with droppings of birds blue after choking out their long, loud twittering. Feverish to an infection elected.

Maybe we knew the ecosystem would collapse; the district would swamp; the indigenous life would rather riot than rot if they saw the people that pushed this wave, otherworldly. If they saw the strange fruit juicing at their lips.
MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY

Arthur C. Ellis | Staff, OCIO

TEARS OF BEAUTY

Mrunmayee Majumder | Post-doctoral Fellow, College of Dentistry
BIG BLUE
Emily Hutson | Student, College of Medicine

TEAPOT
Joy Kirkpatrick | Student, College of Graduate Studies
SPRING AT MIDDLETON
Lisa Graves   |   Staff, College of Medicine

EAST BATTERY VIEW
Konstantin Voronin   |   Faculty, College of Medicine
Cool mist tickled her neck, coating her dark hair. Waves crashed several blocks east on this barrier island off the coast of Charleston. Rain wasn’t likely to start until later that night, with the big weather system coming up the coast. A travel nurse, Rebecca was accustomed to solitude and acclimating to whatever environment each assignment presented. Life on this island was very different. The Mother-In-Law cottage she found on Craig’s List was a step up from “provided housing” from the agency. Finally home, Rebecca sighed, recalling what she had forgot. Keys in hand, she turned to walk quickly back down the slate path alongside the big empty house. Tired, she hurried to the convenience store three blocks away to acquire a flashlight and a few candles for a far heftier price than if she had thought to get them on the mainland.

Another 12 hour shift as the cool collected, downtown emergency room nurse completed, Rebecca had thought only of some blessed rest, a hot shower and hunkering down with a book. She passed across from the rustic island bar with the ‘roadhouse’ feel, crowding early on this Friday, ahead of the near storm. The last thing she needed was being jostled by rowdy drunks, strangers trying to make small talk or fielding come-on lines from locals with superficial interests.

What did she need? A friend. Her old friends were far flung. The girl she liked at this new hospital had a date with, what was it she said? Oh yes, a different ‘flavor of the month’. So she was alone on her third weekend here with only a new book, but there loomed the prospect of a power outage and no light to read by. Optimistic by nature, a veil of loneliness mixed in the mist, clouding her mind; the change in atmospheric pressure could not be fully blamed on the onset of melancholia.

Three candles, a small flashlight and a lighter for $16.45. Rebecca was feeling increasingly invisible. Her “Have a nice day” mumbled to the counter clerk trailed off, and she was back into a misty, deepening dark. She had spoken to only coworkers and panicked patients for two days, and so paused in front of the roadhouse. Warmup guitar riffs were muffled therein. Okay, one drink, just to be among people, neither sick, injured nor dressed in scrubs.

Tapping his fingers lightly on the bar, the bartender asked again politely, “Well, what’ll you have?”

“Wine, beer, but if you desire something stronger, we’re out of Absinthe.”

The band cranked up, startling her. “Absinthe, it was a joke. He leaned closer and tilted his head, “You look like a special girl needing a special drink. But sorry, just beer and wine, so …”

“Ok, red wine.”

Rebecca turned to her left to glance back at the door as it banged shut. Boisterous boys entered, laughing. A couple looked towards her and she looked away.

“Here you go, red wine. With a dash of Absinthe,” he winked.

“Really?”

“Don’t believe everything you hear in this place.” The bartender gave her a curious knowing look and headed off, pushing past the other two young men pushing drinks.

The wine was bitter, tannic with a lingering taste she couldn’t identify. Drinking it quickly in the din of Little Red Rooster, the lights flickered to thunder nearby. The bartender reappeared at the far end of the bar. Was he watching her? Sudden hard rain was on the roof, sounding itself above the end of the song.

Rebecca squeezed her eyes shut. When she opened them, the bartender was across from her, smiling, leaning on the rough hewn bar.

Hey, I better go, have to walk three blocks to get home. How much do I owe?”

He shrugged. “Ladies night. First one’s on the house.”
“Well, thank you. Have a good night.”

“Take care, oh - here’s an umbrella someone left, take it.”

It was a black parasol, wrapped tightly, cuffed and frilled at the bottom edge, like a child’s toy or an antique prop. Rebecca looked at it with curiosity.

“I’m okay. Not afraid to get wet.” She gave him a tiny smile, “Least of my worries.”

Rain poured as the street flooded up to her ankles. Struggling to unlock the door, she collapsed, soaked and dizzy on the couch as the power went down. She tried to sit up remembering that she left the bag with the flashlight and candles on the bar. But that didn’t matter, she was feeling quite high. The darkness and the storm sounds harkened strange places unknown. She closed her eyes to blurred vivid colors, distorted. The wind, hard and howling, pushed branches across the roof repeatedly. Unafraid, a blanket of contentment spread over her.

“Hello,” someone said. “Would you like a friend?”

And a kitten appeared, curled up by her, warm, white and soft.

Morning, then afternoon came. Sunlight filtered through the stained glass panel of the cottage window. Rebecca squinted. Her head was killing her, her clothing damp. Such strange dreams. And she only had the one glass of wine. Suddenly, she heard a kitten’s meow.

The white kitten was there, on the coffee table - tangible, purring. "How did you get in here?" to the kitten, scampering into the kitchen. Rebecca wandered in after it, gathering weapons: a knife, a rolling pin and for some odd reason, a metal spatula. Her back pressed up to the wall, she moved slowly down the hall while laughing at herself, whispering, “Oh yeah, I’m ready to defend myself, if necessary.”

No one was in her room. The kitten hopped up on the canopy bed, wedging between flowered pillows. It had a collar. Good, maybe she could get it back its rightful owner. Slipping the collar easily off, there was no tag. Yet a word was printed on the underside. Absinthe. She gasped.

Rebecca showered and dressed. Her dark thoughts of the previous night were somewhat mixed with a more hopeful feeling, she felt more at home having weathered a storm in this new place.

But who left her that kitten? It was a man’s voice. No one knew her. Could it have been the Bartender, and what could that mean? His promise of seeing her again? She walked to the bar, now populated with a sparse early happy hour crowd. There was but a single bartender.

"Can I help you?"

“I’m looking for the bartender that served me last night, he was kind of handsome, and … he doesn’t drink and …”

He laughed saying, “I’m the only handsome guy that works here. But - one that doesn’t drink? No one like that works here, or comes here, for that matter.”

“No. He told me it was ladies night, and made a joke about absinthe.”

Turning slowly, the bartender said. “We don’t have ladies night here, don’t serve anything but beer and wine, along with occasional live music and an infrequent bar fight. I don’t know who served you, unless it was our ghost.”

“I had a reaction to the wine and it tasted …” She stopped talking and looked to a table top, where sat a brown paper bag, like the one she had left the night before.

“Is that mine?” She asked dreamily. “Wait, a ghost? Is that what you said?”

“I’ve never seen him, but some people say he’s handsome. He’s never served anyone a drink before that I know of. You must be special.”

“That’s right. That’s what he said, he said I was special” Snatching up the bag, she left with a curt, “Thanks.”

Rebecca walked out and crossed back to the convenience store buying cat food and kitty litter. Okay, so I have a kitten, I’m used to taking care of things, right? She could keep it for the duration of the travel assignment in Charleston, then put it up for adoption. Or find it an island home. It would be nice to have company, a little friend. Rebecca imagined dangling string, playing kitten games, sleeping with its soft body next to hers. Entering the cottage, it was dark, still and quiet, absent of life. The kitten was gone.
Dejected and seeking relief, I slipped some accessories into my pocket and headed for the creek. A compact flashlight lit my way through bog myrtles and pines, for I was mindful of a rattlesnake coiled incognito in the shadows. I settled into a weathered seat at the edge of the marsh, inhaled the wafted fragrance of cattails, and watched a full moon rise. Coltrane was playing on my cellphone and his fluid tenor sax set the stage for a rare conjunction of Venus and Mars. The tide was up and faithfully reflected the starlit trajectories of flashing jets, five miles high. Bats dipped and swerved over the marsh. A chirping text interrupted my reverie: a post-doc was looking for an instrument to transfect her cultured cells with foreign genes. I had just the thing in my lab, packed in its original box and rarely used. I replied at once.

The next day, Julieta knocked on my door. She was olive-complexioned, with refined features and a lithe dancer’s body. Her eyes caught mine in a hypnotic grip. After discussing some technicalities of transfection, we agreed to meet later for a drink in the Cafe Fuel. Below prints of Left Bank demi-monde, we regarded each other with interest across a table inlaid with an elegant maple and ebony chessboard. Julieta said that her father had taught her how to play, and that she’d once placed first in a chess tournament in Phoenix. In the final round, her opponent had sat in a wheelchair, a powerful strategy when the chips are down. Her trophy, a kitschy simulacrum of victory gained in defiance of common wisdom, had languished for years in a closet.

Well into my third glass of beer and transfixed by her calm gaze, I glimpsed an opportunity for closer connection. I said wouldn’t a chess club be great, and as my mind darted over the logistics, Julieta said Tuesdays were out; Tuesday was Tango night. She explained that she was obsessed with Argentine tango, which span physical and psychic tendrils that entangled the unwary. She told me about a painting she’d seen in a gallery opening that showed a defiant vulture perched over a blood-spattered banner advertising a masked ball held by medical interns in 1920s Buenos Aires. Back then, she said, Tango was the lingua franca of the dance halls, and the music, the dance, and cheap Malbec all conspired to fuel indiscretion, and worse. I was skeptical, but listened attentively.

Julieta said that the interns used to terrify the ladies with body parts spirited from the anatomy labs. No excess was considered excessive. The tender embrace of a lady’s waist by a dessicated skeletal arm was fair game, as were more intimate caresses by a rigid leathery hand. Things came to a head when a guileless intern sought to trump all previous excess while dancing with the dazzling wife of the Orquestra’s manager. Consumed with passion and bravado, the intern swept off his cape and revealed the severed, formalin-stretched head of a cadaver. The grimacing skull nuzzled her silken throat to the strains of “La Cumparsita.” She was flamboyantly indignant, enjoying the attention accrued by such an outrageous stunt. Her husband, portly and enraged, confronted the couple out on the dance floor. The intern was amused but solicitous, waving a bamboo fan over the wife’s beautiful brow. He turned in surprise when challenged by the husband, who had drawn a pearl-handled Derringer from his waistcoat.

For a moment, Julieta was silent, and I wondered if the prospect of love trumped the certainty of death. Then she laughed, drew me to my feet, tapped her cellphone once or twice, and gave me an earbud. As a Di Sarli waltz swelled silently between us, she tucked an errant curl behind her ear and led me into my first tango. Later that night, she filled my flash drive with her entire tango collection. The foreign melodies snaked effortlessly into the unfathomed cells of my soul, navigating ubiquitous shoals of death or redemption in the relentless pursuit of love.
CONGESTIVE ART FAILURE

An artistic, radiologic rendering of congestive heart failure.

The paint palette overlies the cardiomegaly while the acrylic paint bottles cover the aorta.

Paint splatters symbolize the pulmonary congestion that results.

Kareem Heslop
Student, College of Graduate Studies

Madison Kocher
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DR. JUST

Kareem Heslop
Student, College of Medicine

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SYNERGY: THE HEART OF THE HOSPITAL

Erika Harris
Student, College of Nursing

FLOW
Katie Weas | Staff, College of Health Professions
I peer, squinting into time
Struggling to see
With blind eyes what will come
And of course no imaginings bring
Forth fate
I want to look
Away, not see what trials and
Tortures await
And yet I stare and gather in
My mind fears and passions of
Our future