

Synaesthesia

2019-2020





The Rocks | Shannon He

Synaesthesia is a student-run publication showcasing the literary and artistic talent of the USC Health Sciences Campus. We accept contributions from all HSC affiliates including faculty, staff, and students from the MD, PharmD, PhD, PA, OT, and PT schools.

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The Eye | Peter Hong

This is my visual interpretation of a song called “Eye by Madvillain” featuring Stacy Epps. I drew an inside anatomy of the eye, with Stacy Epps captured within the pupil. On the bottom right I drew the retinal vessels converging into the optic disc. On the bottom left, I drew an upside down inverted image of Stacy Epps captured within the fovea inside the macula. Finally, I colored the vitreous humor in gold.

Alone Together

Rachel Dokko

At birth I was untethered
a slave to life's trajectory
whose currents swept me to this place;
I did not resist
I made it my purpose
but then, I chanced upon you.

Looking at you was like gazing in a mirror
at a face etched by the solitude of shame
and the burden of regret.
This is what my eyes saw
and what my mind understood.
When your eyes saw
your mind understood too.

So why do we continue alone untethered
neither towards ourselves nor to each other?
We are bound by a substance unknown
which makes us both
there, do you see?
The distant beauty of the bright bodies
with darkness spread far between.

At times we'll gaze and will forget
but can't we drift together, at least for a bit?
Though for now we're untethered in the dark
we'll be bound forever by the substance of the stars.

Ladybird

Anonymous

ladybird
hello and send
my regards
to the outside world

fluorescent lights
and drunken nights in bed
rolled and curled
up dreaming of green

green trees
faded dreams
times when we
were only nineteen
flowers sky
scrapers and the grass
would sway and dance
and the sun
oh the sun
the sun would never lie
not like these neon lights
these artificial nights
is this what it means to grow up

i sing a song
you whistle along
the hallways
where we used to hide
some semblance of love

the time is wrong
and I'm just so wrong
for you so
leave before I make you grow
up too soon

green trees
faded dreams
the sun
Over us at twenty-one
flowers sky
scrapers and the grass
would sway and dance
and the sun
oh the sun
would never lie
that's why it tries to hide
so it can't see the sight
of me breaking your young wings
so soon

so ladybird
i'll take you back outside
don't be staring through
the window
wanting this to be in my life
I swear it's not true
so leave, leave me
so fly away
fly away



Untitled | Lamisa Hasan

I was looking for a project to do while stuck at home. I wanted something pretty to look at so I started drawing a flower and then I just kept adding more and more.



Untitled | Sasha Vorperian

Untitled | Sasha Vorperian



Lerdo Highway

Surabhi Reddy

I recall pressing my head
Against the window.

Directing my very own
Major motion picture.

Green screens were green fields
Actors dancing in sunsets and shadows.

Shutter speed set by
Lamp posts and mile markers.

I recall holding up
A cereal box action figure.

To grind the guardrails
On an imaginary skateboard.

Or holding out my arm
Like a boat's rusty outrigger.

Or keeping pace on a tenspeed
Chain rattling on my racehorse.

Or even sometimes
Leaning against the glass.

Simply watching
And thinking.



Untitled | Sasha Vorperian

Untitled | Sasha Vorperian





Untitled | Anonymous

This past October, my younger brother was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease. Less than a month later, he underwent a complete colectomy, a surgery to remove his entire colon. Recently, my brother asked me my "professional" opinion as a medical student about what remains in the space where his large intestine used to be. This piece was inspired by that question and by my deep desire that, even after the life-altering events of the past few months, my brother will never feel less than whole.

17 weeks, 5 days

Priya Bhattacharjee

There was no time that day
 No time in that moment
 So now, as I rest my bones and my feet
 I rest my heart and my mind too
 And I take this time
 To grieve for you
 To mourn you
 To honor you

I believe every woman has a right to choose
 How to carry their bodies
 And that we can empathize and try to understand
 But that we can never truly know
 Another woman's situation or condition
 And so we must give each woman the same respect, dignity, and care
 Each and every woman deserves this

I know unsafe abortions are a leading cause of maternal death
 I can only imagine the desperation a woman goes through
 When she feels her only option
 Is unbending a metal hanger
 Shoving the cold, hard rod up her vagina
 Blindly hoping to enter the cervix
 Only to push harder and harder
 Through the posterior fornix

Into the Pouch of Douglass
Forming a conduit between the rectum and vagina
Opening herself to infection
Sepsis
Death

Access to care is important
Health education is important
Empathy is important

And so, we discuss if there is life in a bundle of cells
We ponder if doctors are murderers
We debate if white men in white collars deserve more rights over the bodies
of women of color
And I know my stance, I am comfortable and self-assured in my opinions

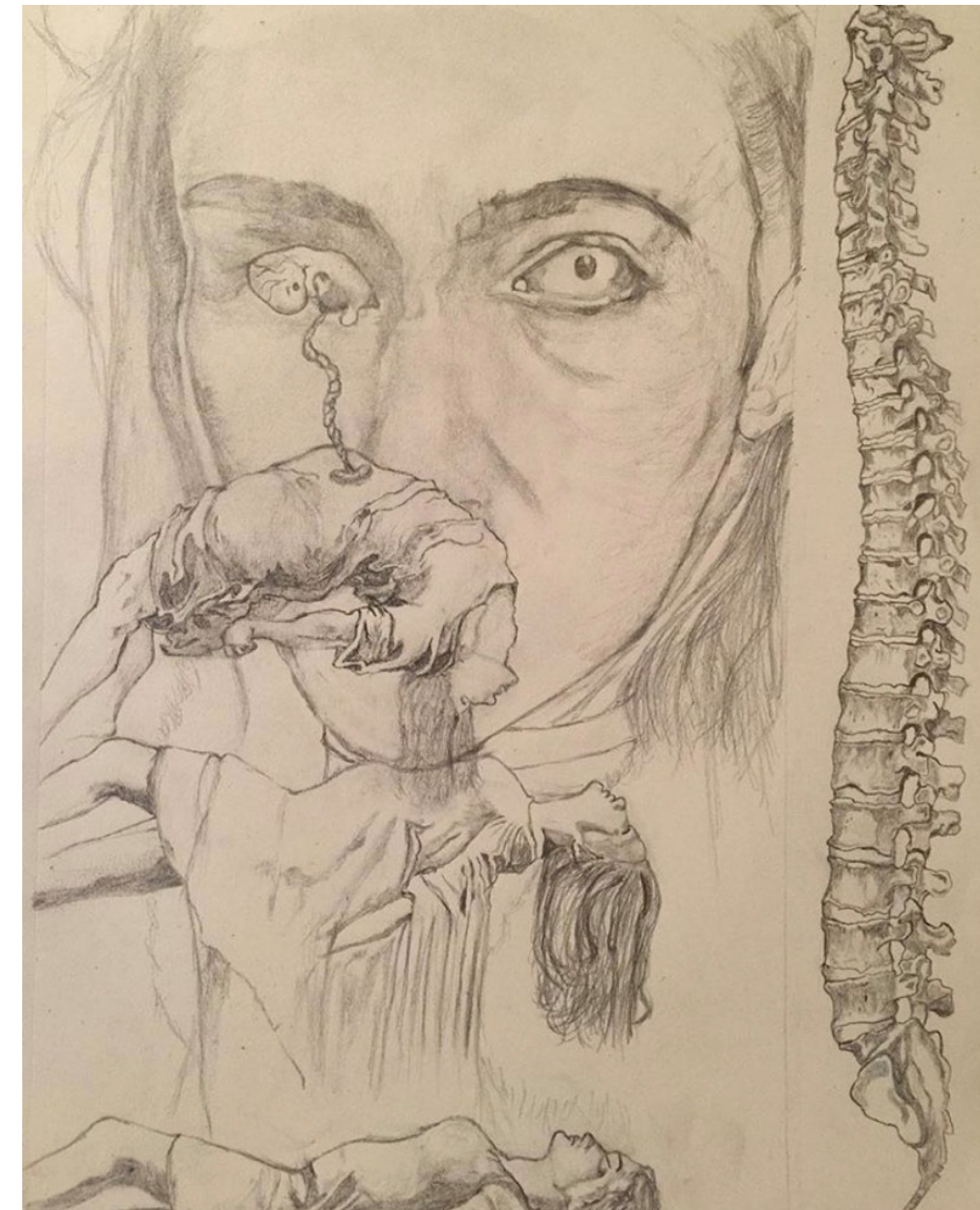
So I was shocked and confused more than anything
At the pang of pain and despair I felt in my chest
When I saw you
At first I didn't even know what was happening
At first I didn't even see you in the room
I entered the room to introduce myself to your mother
Unaware that you had already been delivered
But the nurse told me the patient had just delivered her placenta
Then there was a rush of action
The doctors ran in, checked the vaginal canal, conducted a bimanual exam
Looking for retained products of conception
Your placenta was so small
But it was intact
Your mother was safe

And in the flurry of action I saw you
In your sister's arms, or maybe she was your aunt
A child of maybe twelve or thirteen herself
I didn't know what she was holding at first
Then she gingerly placed you in the crib
Laying you down with such care and caution
It was her demeanor, her respect for you, her love for you that made me
realize
You were real
I saw your humanity in her eyes before I even looked at you
As I locked eyes with her, I saw her pain, her sadness, her grief
And I knew before I saw you who you were

The patient was a 23 yo G8P0I71 s/p delivery at 17wk5d
Fetus delivered in entirety
No signs of life
You were not viable
By definition, you had never been viable
But you were real, I saw you
Small and red, maybe the size of my fist
Your skin was translucent
Your blurry half-developed organs just barely visible under the fluorescent
light
Swaddled in a blanket, only the top of your head was visible
I mourned for you, only for a few moments
Before we rushed out of the room to the next patient, the next mother
But for a few moments, time stopped, and I stared at you
Trying to gather my thoughts and process the pain I felt

I am sorry
I'm sitting in my room, wiping my tears
I cry for your mother, for your family, for the life you could have been
And I realize that even at 17 weeks
You were real
You had significance in someone's life
Your health and your existence mattered to somebody
To many people in fact

You taught me the importance of sensitivity
In conversations with patients
You taught me empathy
For women and mothers and children and humans
You taught me that just as passionately
As I stand up for the rights of women and the right to choose
That I should care for and handle sensitively all patients with the same
passion
That there is no right answer or wrong answer for the questions we debate
But that it is always difficult and painful and heavy
And that you can learn these things from books and lectures and news
articles
But that often you don't truly know these things until you see them
So I take this time to thank you for everything you taught me in the short
time we met
To mourn for your life
To grieve for your lost opportunity of viability
To acknowledge that you were real and that I witnessed you



Flesh Without Blood | Peter Hong

I was inspired by a song called "Flesh Without Blood" by Grimes, and I drew this right after I delivered my first baby during my Ob/Gyn rotation. I drew a witch using a human spinal cord to conjure a fetus from a sleeping gravid woman to use as her new eye. The human spinal cord also represents the guitar riff in the intro, as it symbolizes the "backbone" of the song. I really wanted to capture the demonic yet beautiful/ethereal mood of the song.



Heart Attack | Peter Hong

This is my visual interpretation of a song called "Heart Attack" by Flight Facilities featuring Owl Eyes. When a person's heart is broken, whether it be from a break up, loss of a loved one, and etc, you can sometimes see it in his/her face. To illustrate this, I drew myocardial infarction on a person's face.

On the Pursuit of Success

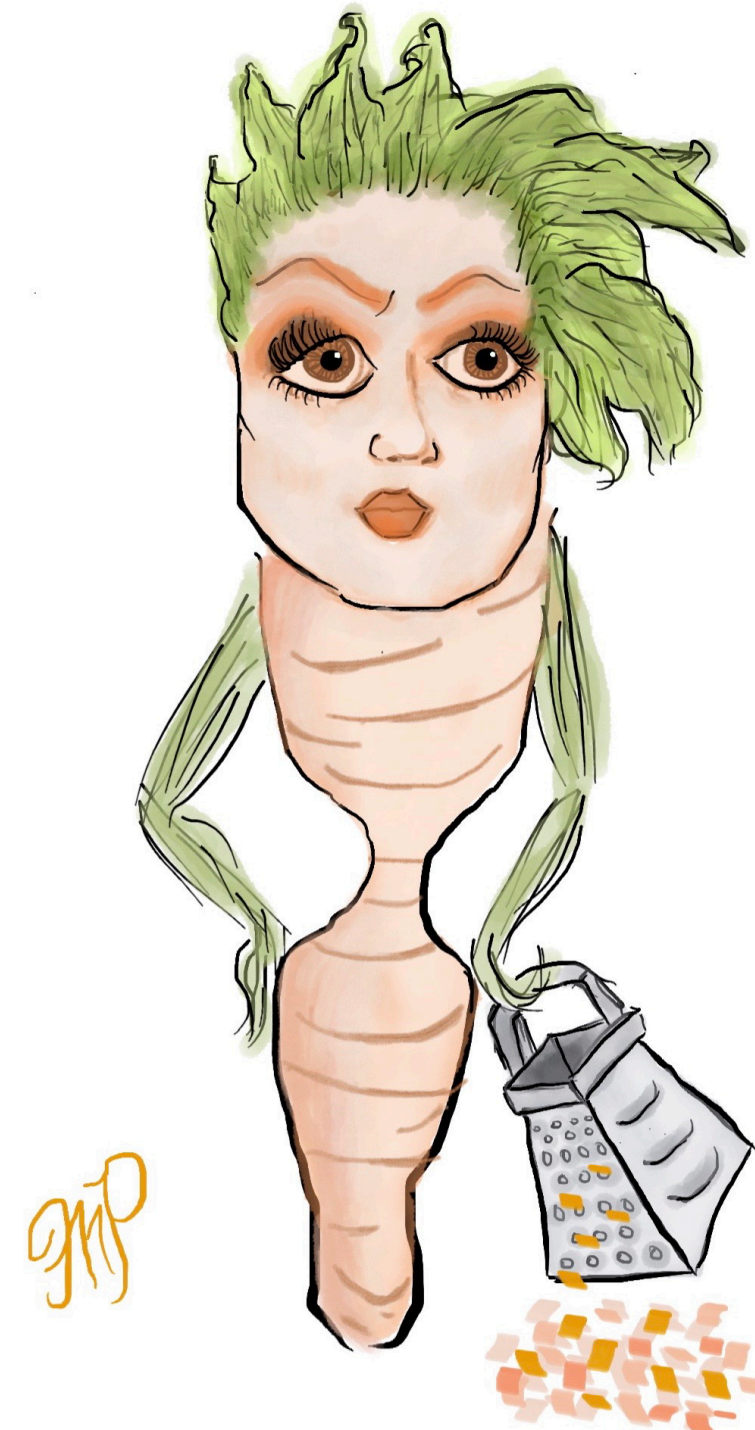
Anonymous

A sea of awards, achievements
A sea of dreams, ambitions
Who will be the best?
Will I rise above the rest?
Who knew all these great minds thought alike—
Famished for pieces of the same pie
Amidst the crowd there were some who were selfless, yes
Those who genuinely wanted to make a change
For the sake of those injusticed...

We'd all like to think of ourselves as them

But instead we're preoccupied
With our daily tasks
And pragmatic thinking
To get to where we want to be
But maybe, instead
We should leave this mentality
Of being trapped in the meritocracy

Lose Weight & Look Grate!
Shave Off a Few & Feel Brand New!
Make That Call if You Carrot All:
1-800-GRATE-MATE!



(V)egomania | Mackenzie Postel

Raise

Anonymous

right now losing people in my life
and i can't quite catch my breath
the last words become smudged up little blurs
and i can't quite fill the holes they've left

i wish i could be
as gentle as they were with me
but maybe that's why it's all so sad
for the times we did and we didn't have

so raise your glass tonight
for the ones you love that might
not be there in the morning
or ones'll salute the sun with you
oh i pray you do

right now regretting possibilities
and they're all so far away
all the hypothetically's don't make actuality
so in the dirt they'll have to stay

i wish that they knew
the world will never be the same
and it's more beautiful and the sky more blue
and it's all because they came our way

so raise your glass tonight
for the ones you love that might
not be there in the morning
or ones'll salute the sun with you
oh i pray you do

life's too short to be on your guard
you gotta love, you gotta love them hard
tell them they mean to world to you
please don't ever wait
and thank them all for everything

right now to the ones i've lost in life
you know i still can't catch my breath
you went so suddenly that i had no time to give
all the love to you i wish i'd left



All This Culture and You're Lactose Intolerant | Sarah Zhou
Keeping Lunar New Year traditions alive

Reflections from a Budding MS3

Senxi Du

There are things about my future that I am certain of. There are other things that I am extremely indecisive about. No surgery, no high acuity situations. But then: do I want to work in a clinic or a hospital, with prevention or cure, short term or long term, or all of the above? In each of my rotations, there have been memorable, poignant, reflective moments; there have also been times of monotony. Medicine is a calling, but medicine is also a job, and I think that's ok.

I've seen multiple well-child visits, which can become routine. But are there brighter things in this world than the smile of loving parents who hear their child is growing well? Maybe only the giggle of that happy child. And on the other end of the spectrum, to glimpse at the fear of the mom whose daughter has been diagnosed with ALL. To hear the guilt, the self-blame, the justification buried among her words and to try to convince her that this is not her fault, that she didn't do anything wrong.

I am still trying to find my role in other people's lives.
How many times do I want our paths to cross?

Once.

Several times for a few years.

A lifetime.

Who do I want to be to you?

That doctor you had in the hospital.

Your [insert organ system here] doctor.

Your doctor.

∞

An attending, a senior, two interns, and three medical students walk into a patient's room. It sounds like the beginning of a joke. The only punchline is that so often I feel unhelpful, like a little barnacle barely hanging on.

The moments where I really feel like part of the team, like I was able to do something for someone, anyone – those are treasured moments. It feels good to be helpful, to be relied on, to be needed.

» We walked down to the ED, our first admission of the day, my first admission of the rotation. A child brought in with a fever in the setting of a seizure – simple enough to call it a febrile seizure. Only this was the second one in the past 24 hours. They were an Asian couple, relatively young, and in the bed lay an infant girl. We introduced ourselves as the pediatrics team. The dad was nervous. He began to tell us some of the story: their daughter had been sick for a few days, yesterday and today she had two seizures, but the real concern was that this wasn't the first time – she had had two other seizures about a month ago, afebrile. The mom didn't understand us, so my senior pulled out her phone and called the translator. The mom looked at me, wondering if I spoke her language. *Cantonese? No. Mandarin? Yes actually, but mostly conversationally. I can try though.* I spoke to her and the dad, in a mixture of Mandarin and English. She filled in the words that I knew but couldn't find fast enough. She refused to use the translator phone and only spoke to me. I could see the change in her eyes. A comfort, a familiarity even, had worked its way in.

She trusts me, I thought. «

we crossed paths

so briefly, barely a brush stroke on life's canvas.

will we ever meet again? probably not.

I hope I made this easier for you, even if just by a little bit.



Untitled | Lamisa Hasan

This represents how I want to be as a doctor (and in general with people in my life): always make an effort to understand a person's background and circumstances before giving your opinion.



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