VOICES 2011

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BEST OF

VOICES 2010 is proud to announce
Awards for the Best of Magazine

LITERARY:
Jerome Wendt
Rebirthing Cynthia

VISUAL ART:
Colleen Granworth
In the Boiler Room

MUSIC:
Zach Cannella
Blessing

FILM & VIDEO:
Lucas Goins
Spectrum Song

Voices wishes to acknowledge
students for their excellence in
literature, music and visual arts.

McHENRY COUNTY COLLEGE
LITERARY / ARTS JOURNAL

Voices 2011 is produced by McHenry County College to recognize and showcase the visual arts, musical, and literary talents of McHenry County College students.

The ideas and the opinions expressed in Voices 2011 are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the attitude of the Board of Trustees, the administration, the faculty, or the staff of McHenry County College. Materials for Voices 2011 were submitted by students who have been enrolled in courses at McHenry County College during one or all of the previous three semesters. The pieces selected for inclusion in Voices 2011 were based on the student editors’ opinion of their aesthetic merit. It is the policy of McHenry County College not to discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, religion, national origin, or handicapped status in its educational programs, as required by Federal regulations. Inquiries regarding compliance may be directed to Angelina Castillo, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources.

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GABI SPARACIO
Earthly Dragon
ceramics
11” x 7” x 2”
Look! There’s Black Hawk!
my dad said, as we sped
along Illinois Highway 2 in our Hudson.
My sister and I raised little-girl eyes
from our Marvel comic books
and glanced across the Rock River
at a white statue far away.

Today, sitting in the shade
of a towering tribute to Black Hawk,
I turn my eyes from bored visitors
who view one more statue
on one more Columbus Day weekend.

I fought hard,
Black Hawk said,
but your guns were well aimed.

I want to tell irreverent visitors,
You disturb sacred places.
Study his eye—the most carefully modeled part—
the eye of Black Hawk, chief of the Sauk and Fox,
whose melancholy eye looks forever
over the river valley he once roamed.

Now, grayhaired,
I look up from my notepad
at 48 feet of concrete,
honoring a conquered chief.
I look out over the Rock River,
alive 240 feet below.
I look back.

KELSEY DAVENPORT

Untitled
photography
10" x 8"
T here wasn’t anything unique about that day. No hurricanes happening. No terrible floods. No wars, no famines. It was like any other early October day, in any other year. The sky was pale blue with just a hint of Indian Summer in the air. People hurried along the street in their cars and busses, on their feet, going somewhere in their usual hurries.

Standing outside I took the final drag from my mooched cigarette, watching as the end of the cigarette glowed brighter from the deep pull of my breath. Flicking the cigarette to the pavement, I crushed it out with the toe of my dirty sneaker. I had really needed that smoke. The aroma of it had driven me insane with want and need. Craving it like a dying man’s last breath. “Once a smoker, always a smoker,” my dad had once told me.

I had been given a short reprieve to sneak out of the waiting room to savor this much-needed cigarette. Even ex-smokers needed one during times of stress, and the last week definitely had been stressful. But there was no more avoiding. No more bargaining or wasting time. It was time to meet with the doctor. The jury had deliberated and the verdict was about to be read.

The ride in the elevator was a silent one I shared with my cousin Mike. I could see our reflection in the stainless steel doors of the elevator. Distorted among the smeared fingerprints and smudges of dirt, our faces wrought with tension, our lips pursed, fine lines etched around our eyes. Without fanfare, we walked the corridor of the third floor, listening to the beeps of the patients’ monitors, the doctors’ names being paged over the intercom, the squeak of our shoes against the tile floor.

All eyes turned toward us as we entered the room, taking the seats farthest from my mother, who was flanked on either side by my siblings. I watched the scene unfold as if I were an outsider looking in. I could hear the doctor’s voice as if I were in a fog. “Terminal. Brain dead. Morphine.” I watched in slow motion as my family struggled with their tears, their fingers intertwined with each other as their knuckles whitened in their grips, their noses turning red as they keened.

I sat frozen in my chair, unable to breathe, to move, to feel, until another of my cousins grabbed me by my shirt, yanking me straight out of my chair and shoving me. “Comfort your mother,” he yelled. His remark reverberated in my mind; my eyes swam with tears as my heart thumped painfully in my chest. There was no way I could comfort my mother. She wasn’t the one who needed comforting. It was my father who I ran to.

Tears were streaming down my face and I fell to my knees on the cold, dirty tile floor next to my father’s bed. Taking his cold, rubbery hand in mine, pressing his palm against my tear streaked face, I could still smell the lingering of his final cigarette on his hand. He was dying—or, according to the doctor, was already brain dead. But I could still see him breathe; I could see his lungs expand as he took each breath, his chest trembling as he released each one. Dead? How could that be? It was only a week ago that he had come out to watch my son’s football game. Only four days ago he had told me he loved me. It is inevitable that a child buries a parent, but that doesn’t make it any easier.

My sisters, mother, and I gathered that night in my parents’ bedroom, looking at the surroundings as if seeing them for the first time. I walked toward my father’s closet, looking at the door, white, paint peeling. It squeaked as I opened it. “I really need to repaint this,” he had said to me just last week.

Walking into the closet, I closed the door behind me, shutting out the noise, the light, and engulfing me in his scent. I wrapped myself in his clothes that hung around me, and without thought, I peeled off my jacket, letting it slip to the floor. I draped his favorite sweater over my shoulders and pulled my arms through the sleeves. Zipping it closed was like having him wrap his arms around me. There would be no more bear hugs, no more scratchy whiskers against my cheek as he kissed me hello or goodbye. No more fingers running through my hair, pulling out the knots.

Slipping my jacket over my father’s sweater, I buttoned the jacket closed and tucked the long sweater up under my coat. I opened the closet door and told my family I was going home. I walked out into the night with my father’s sweater hidden under my coat, like a thief in the night. Ratty and old, that sweater still holds together nine years later, almost as if it knows that sometimes, even a grown woman needs to feel her daddy’s arms around her.
<KISS OF FIRE>

(THICK TANGO)

Heat, Anger
Fear, Desire
A look, a breath, hands splayed as they glide
Turning, and pulling, begging, and caressing
Bodies pressed close together
Each one giving
Each one taking

Seduction, Dominance
Passion, Surrender
Tightly woven, two hearts beating
He draws her near, she slinks away
Hands trail, bodies shiver
Eyes wide open

A Slap, a Sigh
A Kiss, a Moan
Moving together their longing silent
He brushes against her they glide, as they twirl
Feet tangling as hands linger
Which one is conquered
Which one the master
CHIP HUMBERTSON
The Jon Peschke
Oil on canvas
32” x 24”
MICHELLE WHITT
The Beginning
digital print
8” x 8”
LYNN LICASTRO
Southwest Blue Square
ceramic
2" x 10" x 5"
They loped hurriedly past our vehicle, 
eight or ten reticulated giraffe. 
In the Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania 
life teemed, majestic and cruel.

One tall necked beauty turned back, 
hesitated, gazed at a small patch 
of acacia trees and shrubs. She knew 
they were there, the lions who took her baby.

The herd moved on. Some stopped 
and looked back at her, then caught up. 
She stepped toward the trees, but 
turned suddenly as the ground shook 
with a low guttural warning from the cats.

She passed directly before us and 
I looked up at her glassy black eyes. 
They were wet and a tear slid down 
and off to the ground. She moved on.
JESSICA PIWNICKI

Obliterated Elegance
charcoal
27" x 11"
ANTHONY SAMUEL GRANA
Untitled
oil on canvas
60" x 72"
SYNDI SIMON
The Taste of Nature
forged copper
8” x 2” x 1”
VISUAL ART

PATRICIA VOLLKOMMER

I Believe in Fire
pottery
9.5" x 5" x 3"
I met Josette after one of my many daily walks. Many because my Golden Retriever, Ms Maxi, needed exercise since we’d moved from a house to a condo.

When we first met, Josette walked simply for the exercise, but after meeting Ms Maxi, Josette said she walked hoping to run into Ms Maxi and me. She loved dogs.

Although our run-ins were never planned, I enjoyed our meetings, the walking together, the talking. Ms Maxi loved the fuss Josette made over her as well as the treats she brought.

The friendship we developed over time was casual—no coffees or lunches or get togethers of any kind; we were simply simpatico, content with our daily pleasant meetings.

Ms Maxi was no youngster when we moved to the condo complex. Because of Ms Maxi’s age and failing health, her death about a year later was no surprise. Although I missed her so much, I did continue to walk, and continued to bump into Josette.

A few months after Ms Maxi’s death, I saw Josette’s ample shortness drifting toward me led by a tiny bundle of curly brown energy attached to a leash. Since Josette had never mentioned wanting a dog, I felt surprised. Personally I had decided that another dog was not in my future, not in a condo.

Josette explained that her family decided she needed company. Although she wasn’t entirely convinced, Josette accepted the brown bundle of love graciously. And so the little mutt was called Muggzy.

As things turned out, energetic, mini Muggzy grew to become Josette’s loyal companion, protector, one who grumbled at strangers, and friend.

Josette returned those favors in kind, despite the responsibilities tiny Muggzy imposed.

Even without Ms Maxi, Josette, Muggzy, and I fell into our old walking routine: chatting, sometimes clucking over the latest condo gossip. I noticed Josette growing slim. I wasn’t surprised. Walking will often do that.

Over the months that we walked, Josette’s steps slowed. Muggzy grew frustrated, tugged at her leash as if trying to speed the pace. Every now and then, I’d relieve Josette of the leash. Then Josette sat on a near-by bench to wait while Muggzy strolled me at a brisk pace, but the little dog always looked back at Josette as if assuring itself that her mistress was a-okay.

Then came a morning that I didn’t run into Josette and Muggzy. I figured they were visiting family. Although I was surprised that Josette hadn’t mentioned going away. Daily, I watched for them. I considered ringing Josette’s doorbell but didn’t. No sense being a nosey neighbor.

A couple of weeks passed before I spotted Muggzy leading a younger woman down the sidewalk. I recalled that Josette had sometimes mentioned her daughter, Jillian. I called out and the woman stopped. Then Jillian told me that Josette was recovering from a complete mastectomy. Josette hadn’t even felt the pea-sized lump.

My jaw tightened as I tried to keep my sudden tears in check. Images of Josette flashed before me: Tired, slow steps, weight loss. Symptoms so easy to ignore when Josette looked healthy and rosy. Within weeks, it looked like Josette was on the road to recovery after surviving surgery, chemo and radiation. Rehab took time, but eventually Josette was able to walk Muggzy again. I made it a point to walk along, occasionally taking the leash and settling Josette on the bench per our old routine.

It seems strange, when I think about it, that our friendship never extended beyond the dog-walking. Was it instinct demanding that we keep our relationship casual...light...that it was too late for more? Who knows.

On the other hand, we didn’t seem to need more. And Josette was always a joy to meet, talk to, laugh with over something insignificant like a funny TV episode.

Although Josette’s surgery, treatment, and rehab appeared to be successful, she survived a mere six months.

After her death, I learned from Jillian about how much Josette had loved roses. White roses, especially. During Josette’s recovery, Jillian set a white miniature rose plant on the table beside her mother’s bed. The little plant brightened those long, dark days.

Weeks after the funeral, after the moving truck pulled away, Jillian planted Josette’s white rose in our little English Garden, a stone’s throw from Josette’s condo. It’s been there now for three years—prolific and peace inspiring—outstanding. I speak to it daily.

Occasionally, Jillian walks Muggzy back to our complex. The little fur ball always tugs her toward the English Garden, then stops in front of the white rose plant still thriving, just a stone’s throw from the window where the dog once sat watching the world go by.

When Muggzy visits the garden, I reach down, stroke her little head and tell her that I call the rose, Josette.

The little fur ball knows. Muggzy feels Josette’s presence lingering there.
KRYSTAL GARCIA

Respirator
mixed media
14.5" x 11.5" x 4"

VISUAL ART
ZACH WALTERS
Reflection
digital photograph
8” x 10”
Living in the suburbs of Chicago keeps one guessing what the weather will bring from moment to moment. If you don’t like the weather, wait a few minutes and it will change. Winter seems to grow longer each year. The cold begins in November and winter gear needs to be unpacked just a little earlier. There are times when the seasons tend to skip autumn altogether.

The last several years have been unseasonably cold, even for our region. I find myself searching for anything positive in those brutally cold and snowy days. Cabin fever can set in very quickly as the long cold days seem to blend into each other. Longing for days of sunshine becomes something that we hear in everyday conversation. When it seems like it will be never-ending, looking to the beauty in nature brings about some positive emotions in one’s gray perspective.

One February morning, I awoke to the trees covered in, what looked like, sifted powdered sugar. Every inch of the surrounding area was covered in an almost fantasy like vision. It was a result of the freezing fog, something I don’t think I’d ever before witnessed.

With everything that the freezing fog enveloped, nothing had been left untouched. Maybe this was God’s way of opening our eyes to all of the beauty around us. I have driven Route 14 many times, and for the first time, in the car, I was aware of the beautiful natural landscape that lined the road, the deep red colors of the barns that sit back from the farm houses. Every spindle in the front porch railings seemed to have been etched in silver. A single light was shining from each porch, soon to be extinguished by the full light of day. The fences had short stacks of white that rose to the top of their pointed finishes. A beautiful memory to add to the collection of portraits that nature provides each of us every day.

I took in every ounce of this beauty from the warmth of my car, knowing that once I left the moving cocoon, the bitter cold would snatch my breath away. As I continued my drive back home, I had to remind myself to focus on driving, but it was more than I could stand. I just wanted to burn this image into my brain, to save it for those other days that seem so gray and dull. I was saddened by the quick departure of the beauty this freezing fog had created, not knowing if I would ever encounter such a mystifying event again.

We must brace ourselves for the cold, bitter winters, but the weather is something that has never halted the busyness of the locals. We adjust to what Mother Nature brings us each year, knowing that the eventual thaw will bring another season.

LITÉRATURE

BEAUTY OF THE WINTER

TRACY SILVA

Beauty of the Winter
creative non-fiction
MARY SWENSON

Winter

oil on canvas

40" x 32"
Throughout the public presentation of this hometown hero, I could not help but wonder if Jason ever received this kind of respect or recognition during his twenty-two years. I could not help but wonder if teachers and classmates and acquaintances nurtured him with love, friendship, and encouragement, or if he had to wait until his death in a far away place for a far away reason to receive any kind of acknowledgement.

Such irony. From the destruction, devastation, and stark reality of war come parades, pomp, and pageantry. Flags waving, eyes filled with proud tears, and the murmur of somber voices will bring the community together. Those who have never met each other or Jason will meet and greet and agree that this certainly was a beautiful tribute for their fallen soldier.

The greatest tragedy of all is that this parade was ever necessary and that Jason will never know.
RICK NEUBAUER

Turning Point

oil on canvas

60" x 48"
VOICES 2011

VISUAL ART

JEFF SIMON
Organicka
digital illustration
24” x 18”
I Was a Being of Light

JOSHUA HILGART-ROY

9" x 8.25"
ADAM OPARYK

Radiofly Me

oil on canvas

60" x 48"
MY DADDY IS A SOLDIER

Daddy, how was your day?  
Precious daughter of mine,  
the sun was glaring, illuminating terror and tragedy  
in the eyes around me,  
smiles devoured by fixed, ghoulish grimaces.  
Yes, Daddy, but how was your day?  
I pulled triggers aimed at nameless strangers  
who pulled triggers back at me.  
Explosions and screams eroding and rotting  
the gift of precious quiet.  
But, Daddy, your day—tell me how it was.  
Daylight betrayed me as I desperately sought shadows  
to block and parry the fear and the ferocity I faced—  
the shadow, a reprieve, but only a moment,  
then on.  
Daddy, you need to tell me…your day…all about it.  
I’m trying to explain, but words are wanting—  
how to tell you of my day—  
the horror in my being  
has smothered all sense of sensible and sane.  
Daddy, just an answer—tell me, how was your day?  
My sweet child,  
my day was disintegrating all around me.  
So will my tomorrow.  
No Alpha, no Omega, until death says Good Night.
The day I died
I married a ghost,
And it kills me to say it,
But I love her the most.
Still I’m always mourning
So who’m I to boast
About the one I love:
The one who’s a ghost.

She follows me ‘round
And she haunts my dreams,
Though she’s seldom there
It always seems.
My breath like smoke
When she hears my screams—
“Please, wake me up!
It must be a dream...”

Your body’s preserved;
It’s all I’ve left,
Your cool, chilled touch,
Your freezing breath.
I’ll keep you safe,
I learned from the best,
Locked in the attic,
Upstairs, to the left.

Should I be at peace
With my beautiful ghost,
I’d ascend, and move on,
Like a wedding toast.
Then she would haunt
Alone, coast to coast,
And that cannot be, love.
You’re my bride, my ghost.
VISUAL ART

DOUG WEBSTER
Mr. Blue
clay
9" x 7" x 4.5"

VOICES 2011
GREGG LUPER
Amazon Andrea Pearson
inkjet print
10” x 15”
In the Boiler Room

colleen grandrath

digital photography

8.5" x 11"

34
Can I hear red?
I can see the red leaves in autumn.
I can feel the red chill in the wind.
I hear red as a crisp, fierce roar of fire.

The burn pile started slowly, timidly,
licking at the edges of thick wood blocks
without hurting them, consuming
slender sticks and slats of wood.

Then the red and yellow flames began a dance
in the center of the pile. It was a fandango
of flashing flames for our entertainment.
We alternated feeding the pile of scrap lumber,
dodging flames leaping out at us
unexpectedly, as the wind changed.

Soon there was a low rumbling force of
red hot coals consuming scraps of wood
at an increasing pace.
The flaming beast was ravenous now,
like a giant animal who was tasting
raw meat for the first time.

The red flames outnumbered the yellow,
stretching out even farther to whisk each
piece of wood from our gloved hands.
The heat became so intense, we could only
throw the wood from a distance, feeling
the skin burn on our faces.

The red hot fire was a living thing now
and we were its keepers. It lapped up
patches of green grass just outside the
burning ring. Charred embers tumbled out.
At its height, we had fed it the last scrap.

We watched in wonder as the fire leapt
danced with the wind, raging, smoldering
and very, very slowly dying from the outside in.
I heard red that day. I heard it. I saw it. I felt it.
I smelled it and tasted it. I saw it live and die.
GLORIA STEWART

Olympia in Camo—After Manet, After Rivers
acrylic
18" x 56"
FAMILIAR PLACES

Resting old stones show their wrinkles
As ferns primp for the next breeze
And a meandering brook divides canopy shadows
for sunlight
Highlighting fairie seeds as
Lazy floating targets for foraging
Dragons on the wing.
A tornado of gnats in and out of moist shadows
Form abstract distraction
From tranquility as
Familiar musty nasal memories are rudely interrupted
By tickling goldenrod pollen.
A reprise of orchestrated serenity
Nurturing joy like an old Friend
Visiting again after being away.
ASHLEY ERIN WENNERSTROM

Grandma’s Attic
physical art
7.34” x 11”
A.J. DAVIDSON
Frames
digital photograph
8.5” x 11”
HEATHER GRANT
Twisted
clay
7" x 15" x 15"
NANCY TERRANOVA
Pierced Double Walled Bowl
porcelain
3” x 6.5” x 6.5”
Cynthia LaRousse is not a passé persona. Oh, it had been years since I had last done legitimate theater, I know, but I kept active with voice-overs and readings at the Oak Glen Library children’s storytelling. But now, now I had opportunity to actually ‘walk the boards’ again, and I was ecstatic.

It’s not to say that I was ever a star of the greatest magnitude. But there was a time when I was well recognized, even sought after, because I was a worthy and versatile player. While I never made a magazine cover, there were numerous articles written about me, I turned many heads in the day, and I even gave out more than a few autographs. Saying that Cynthia LaRousse just ‘got by’ with her craft wouldn’t nearly be the whole story. There was glamour and bright lights and even a ‘stage door Johnny’…or two! And I wasn’t ready to leave it all behind.

Now came this new opportunity to play a romantic lead. Darling, it was just summer stock, but a casting call with many attractive women, all of whom were much younger than I, resulting in me being chosen was enough to put me in a cloud. And this play could end up being picked up for a run in Connecticut, if things went well. After all these years, my star was to shine again. I would, and this play was my resurrection. At sixty-eight, I was back home.

The play went well. A few tardy cues, a reluctant prop feather duster, and the curtain came down. I heard a muffled sound of applause. The cast lined up, holding hands and smiling like silly school girls. God, it was grand. Curtain and lights came back up and the room positively swelled. I was back home.

Backstage to accolades and brief visitations of friends and fans, I basked in my return. My dressing room was abloom with bouquets! I was an ingénue again. Cynthia LaRousse could still run this damn race. I still had it! If there was ever a tonic for an old actor, this was it.

Now, I carefully prepared for the coronation. There was an opening night party where all had opportunity to really glamour up, with the case going almost completed, I can now turn to more actual dialogue, confident that Cynthia’s story will spell critical success for me. Journalists so like drama, as a remake of Sunset Boulevard, is sure to please audiences as a fresh, more modern, and less grandiose take on Norma Desmond. With this outline for my final script. My new play, Birthing Cynthia, as a remake in my salad days. It had been more cherished than worn, but it still fit. It was a comfort to drape myself in its soft, flowing panels. So, now, my entrance: that addictive buzz of a crowd’s critical commentary surrounded, enveloped me. It was all about me. After polite nods and small bon mots, I made my way to the bar. With dramatic flip of the hair, I turned to the bartender, a distinguished gentleman in formal bar-back attire. ‘I’ll have a Gibson, please,’ I oozed.

‘Certainly, madam. You know, I haven’t had an order for one of those in forty years,’ he shot forth.

Sabers of searing steel plunged my heart. My porcelain face cracked and the Medusa was revealed. My Chanel hung limp upon my crêpey décolleté. Inside of me, ‘old, faded, jaded hag’ resonated. I swooned to a chaise where moist droplets pooled in my crows’ feet...

Here I stopped, leaving the telling of “Cynthia” behind and breaking my train of thought as playwright creating this outline for my work in progress. I sit back from the keyboard and segue into thinking how I might work, “If you peel an onion, you must expect to make tears” into dialogue for my final script. My new play, Birthing Cynthia, as a remake of Sunset Boulevard, is sure to please audiences as a fresh, more modern, and less grandiose take on Norma Desmond. With this outline almost completed, I can now turn to more actual dialogue, confident that Cynthia’s story will spell critical success for me. Journalists so like drama, even when it’s contrived. I can tell you right here and now: with Birthing Cynthia, critics won’t be calling me a “dinosaur hack” any longer!
RICH GRUSDIS

Tea Party
oil on canvas
24” x 48”
DONALD STEPHENS

Untitled
watercolor
12” x 9”

VOICES 2011
Belén Ashley
Paranoia
clay and metal
16.5” x 5.5” x 2.25”; 8” x 4.5” x 2.25”; 7.5” x 3” x 2.25”
Wrinkled and fragile geriatric wafers
spent from supple green canopies
protesting shred and crunch
under pulling forged tines
disturbing made beds
into piles of crispy cushions
soon to plume; wafting
into voluptuous curling contrails
so delicious with pungent acridity;
leaving pity puddles of gray palette
soon to slurry and wash away clean
by first cold rain
marking finality of
relentless transitions.