

# Art Tales

A Unique Contest  
for Creative Writers

## 2012 Contest Winners



Cassandra Jones



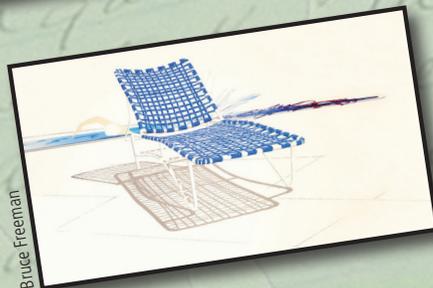
Lee Hodges



Carol Rosenak



Joseph Pisanti



Bruce Freeman

CITY OF  
**VENTURA**  
PARKS, RECREATION &  
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS  
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Fourth Annual

# Art Tales

A Unique Contest for  
Creative Writers

The City of Ventura is pleased to sponsor, in partnership with E.P. Foster Library, a creative contest for local writers. The competition invites writers to submit an original short story or poem that was inspired by one of the Municipal Art Collection works of art currently on exhibit on the second floor of the E.P. Foster Library in downtown Ventura.

In an effort to make the City's art collection more accessible to the community, the City of Ventura joined with E.P. Foster Library to provide an exhibit space for a limited number of works, which are rotated annually. Each piece in this year's assortment of artwork challenges the viewer to puzzle over the work's meaning and provides an excellent opportunity for students and adults alike to exhibit their written skills while learning about viewing works of art. This contest is a call for imaginative and inventive people to examine a work of art and then write a short story or poem reflecting their unique interpretation.

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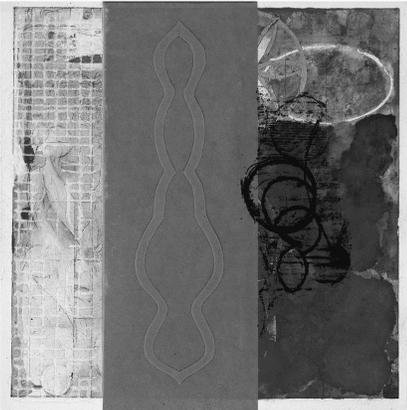
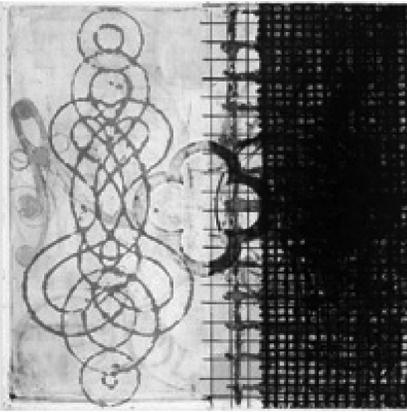
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## FIRST PLACE: YOUTH: FICTION

### Creating This

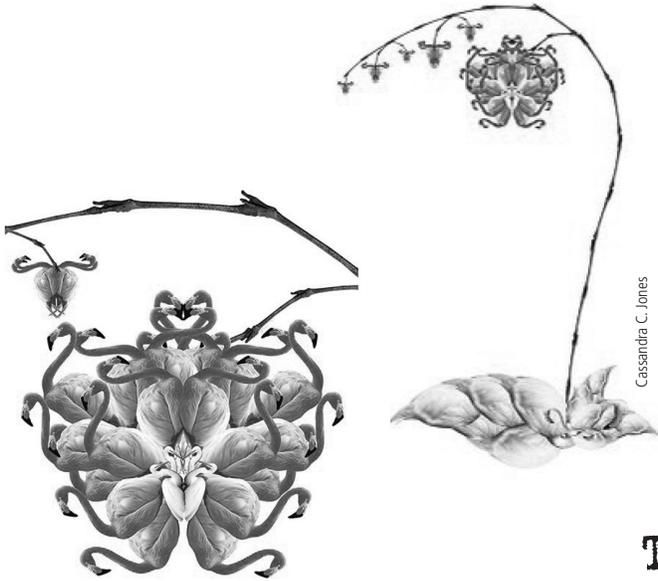
By Sarah Yenney



Joseph Pisentini

Creating this,  
Beginning with a simple red A,  
Just the letter A,  
What else?  
Then, the imagination and colors begin to pour out of my  
mind like tumbling graceful raindrops past a bright, glowing  
rainbow hovering above my head,  
A splash of this,  
A dash of that,  
Over time, different thoughts arise, starting to cover up the  
old ones, just like new photos in a family album of memories,  
Colors seem to be fading and washing away among the  
deep sea of creativity,  
But the music of the painting keeps flowing in the ongoing  
salty waves,  
Just like new, fresh notes, swirling through the air, waiting to  
be caught by an ear like a fishing net and heard, there are  
new colors waiting to be seen and admired,  
The rest not gone forever, still lingering around ghostly and  
mysteriously,  
The art is life,  
As you go through life you may discover new interests or  
travel on different paths, swing open different doors and  
trigger them with different keys,  
Changes will happen,  
That is just fine,  
As long as you always remember who you truly are inside,  
Just like the colors on the artwork, your true self will never  
abandon you, a loyal friend.

*Inspired by "CR 8.01 & 9.00," 2000, tradigital etching by Joseph Pisentini*



## **The Flamingo Mystery**

**By Alexandra Avila**

The Orchid Tree started off as a baby flamingo, and grew up into a teen flamingo. One day when she was eating dinner she felt strange. The next day she looked and felt even stranger and that night she stayed up worried until she saw her feet turn into roots and her legs turning into branches. She was more worried than ever before saw her body turn into a leaning branch. She thought it was finally the end of her life, but then when the magic hit her face she knew she was turning into a flower.

Today she is still alive, beautiful.

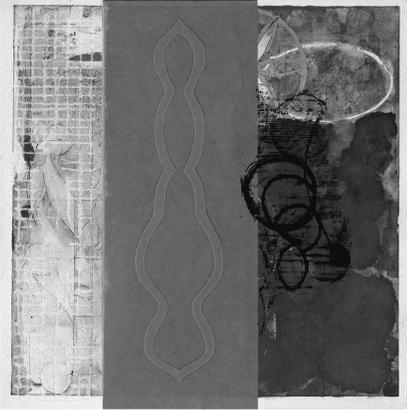
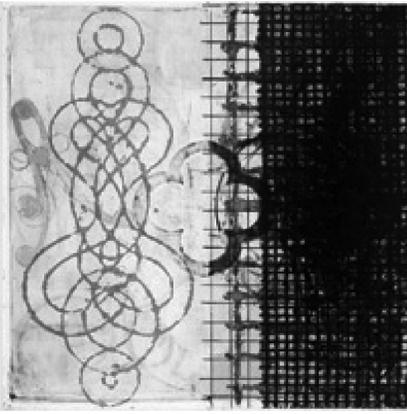
*Inspired by "Rara Avis Orchids," 2007, archival C-print by Cassandra C. Jones*

## Third Place: Youth: Fiction

### The Coming

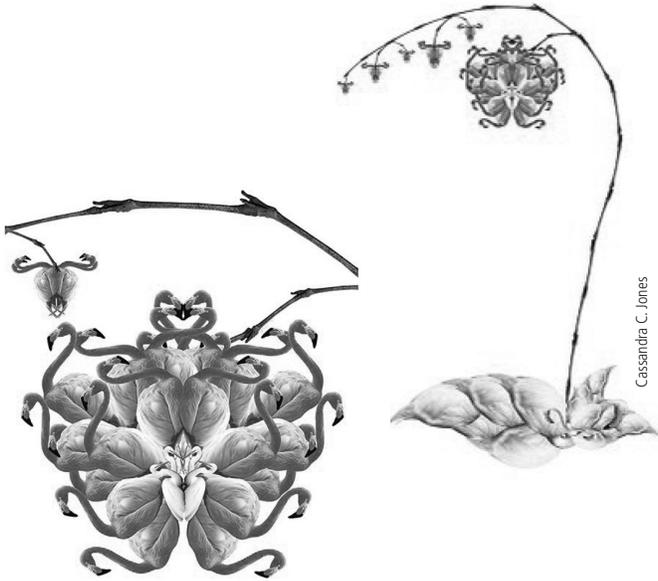
By Kaden Pryor

A green life form only living in the ways of creation swoops and glides in a single spot like a bird of color trying to recreate slowly pushing back the empty cloud this cloud is a virus destroying creation like ink growing in water spreading but sinking with nothing in it wants nothing to surround it wants a black space to consume the world like clouds masking the sun it already engulfing lush fields and tall building civilizations all evaporating to nothing leaving one hope one creation of lush color and pattern to survive like a rock going up an avalanche the virus spreading consuming and growing all words all culture and creations being sucked into the last color as it changes them adapts them uses them to make new ones then releasing them from steel chains to swiftly be carried towards the darkness like ants destroying a tree but ever so slowly wearing it away until a new world is restored with new ideas related to the old ready to fight the virus and be recreated again and again evolving growing until the color fades what would happen how would we know what was the color... the color was life which is what ever color that life exists in.



Joseph Piasentin

*Inspired by "CR 8.01 & 9.00," 2000, tradigital etching by Joseph Piasentin*



## **Deception Flower**

**By Connor Ames**

A beautiful flower that hangs by a twig,  
almost as if it hangs by the fate of the world.

Beautiful flower that might not be there long,  
beautiful flower be strong.

Beautiful flower with soft colorful petals,  
soft as a moonlight sky.

Beautiful flower might not be there long,  
beautiful flower be strong.

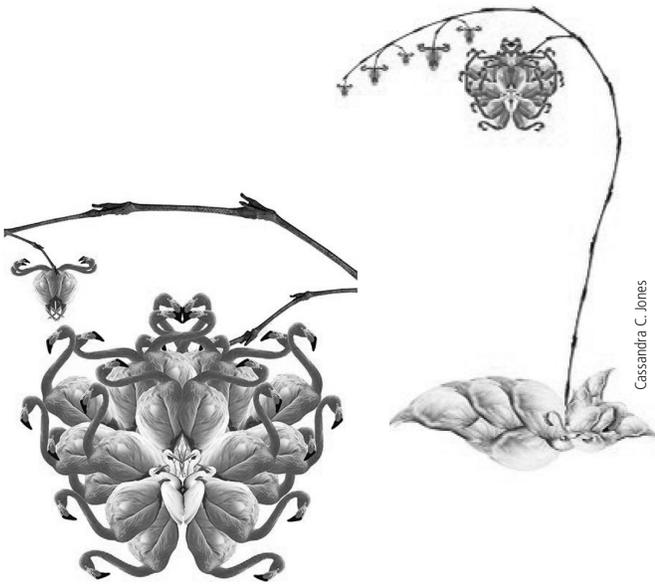
Now up close I see I've been deceived,  
flamingos replace the flower I once believed.

There once was a flower that I believed  
but now I know I was deceived.

*Inspired by "Rara Avis Orchids," 2007, archival C-print by Cassandra C. Jones*

## **As Their Red Tails Collide**

**By Makayla Ann Pratt**



As their red tails collide,  
They shape the form of one.  
They come together, side by side,  
until their form is done.

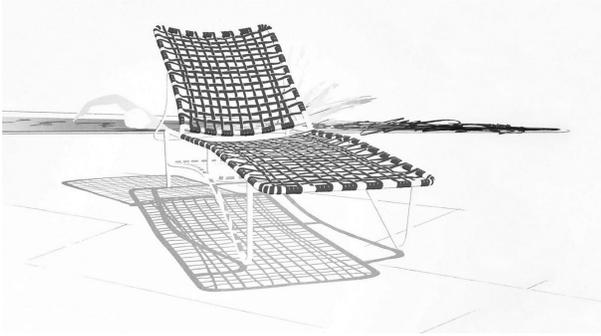
On the top, they'll never stop  
until they all succeed.  
Their beaks can drop, their necks can pop,  
Their feet might even bleed.

While on the bottom, they form the leaves,  
until they're all so very pleased.  
As their red tails collide, they've made their shape,  
and now they can all happily escape.

And as they scatter, as nothing matters,  
they've made an orchid, and have never been gladder.  
Then I woke up, for it was just a dream,  
And all their colors go down the stream.

And as for the orchid, it soon will die.  
And all that I will be able to hear, are the  
beautiful flamingoes' cries.

*Inspired by "Rara Avis Orchids," 2007, archival C-print by Cassandra C. Jones*



Bruce Freeman

## I Swim

By Courtney Caldwell

I swim,  
Lap after lap  
Splishing and splashing  
Up and down  
Over and over again,  
I hear the whispers of the neighbors  
"Why is she swimming there,  
She knows what happened"  
Says the raspy voice,  
Of an unknown body  
"Oh, just leave her be,  
Her mother says she's...  
troubled"  
Says the soft voice,  
Of a neighbor unknown  
I know what happened,  
I don't care,  
And they hate me for that  
Why should I be scared,  
Just because a little girl drowned,  
Or because the blue lawn chair,  
Snapped on a boy?  
Why should that stop me,  
Is it just because the blood,  
Of the little girl still remains,

Or that the lawn chair, is still there?  
Or maybe it's because,  
That the boy and girl,  
Were my brother and sister  
Maybe they think,  
That something similar,  
Will happen to me  
Or they fear,  
That my parents don't care,  
Or that I'm "ill"  
But it's true,  
My parent's really don't care  
But the one thing,  
That really bugs me,  
Is that no one asks  
They just assume,  
And that drives me crazy  
They think I'm crazy,  
They, my parents, and everyone,  
Think that I am troubled  
I stare at the blue lawn chair,  
It is the only one,  
Wait, it is the only thing that really listens  
It is my only friend,  
And that makes me sad

*Inspired by "Chaise Lounge," 1983, limited edition serigraph by Bruce Freeman*



Carol Rosenak

## First Place: High School: Fiction

# I Love You, I'm Sorry

By Annabelle Warren

She left while I was sleeping. Emptied our dresser, packed her things in a duffel bag, and walked out the front door. There was no bitter quarrel, no kiss goodbye; she didn't even bother to close the front door all the way.

I woke up to an empty bed in a room that now only contained half of the things that it did yesterday. I couldn't blame her for her decision; I knew how unpleasant I was to be with. Why would she want to sleep next to someone so bleak? She was a desert flower; I was the desert. On my nightstand she had set out my bottle of antidepressants: a token of her sentiment. I grimly thanked her in my head, and popped two pills that wouldn't make me see color, but could make the shades of gray just a bit lovelier.

The mechanical gears in my legs worked me out of bed and down the hall. The pile of high heels that once cluttered the doorframe had disappeared. As I passed the bathroom, I noticed that her toothbrush was gone. I felt my throat swelling, and I knew that any normal person would be crying right now, but I am hollow. My emotional lake had dried up long ago, leaving behind the fossil of a man. I was headed for the kitchen when I was halted by the light from the room to my left. It was her studio.

She had left it as though she were still in there. Sunlight was bursting through the windows, casting a halo on every object in the room. The dress I had bought for her on her 24th birthday was draped over a chair,

and cheap plastic tulips in a waterless vase adorned the seat of another chair. Her favorite glass ornament of a hummingbird hung just above a basket of crops she had picked up from the farmer's market. No doubt they were intended for a still life; she hated turnips. Her art took up the vast majority of space on the walls. Each piece was just as delicate and vivid as the next, each stroke was a story in itself. Every move she made was a burst of color and light; the perfect paradox to my own gloom. The air of the room was still thick with her sweet strawberry perfume.

Suddenly, a sparkling object off to the left caught my eye: her locket, dangling from a pin in the wall. She never took that locket off; she'd had it for as long as I could remember. As I walked over to it, I realized I was trembling. My hands were shaking so hard, I could hardly handle the tiny silver latch. Finally, I heard the click, and a little folded note fell out. As I opened it, my knees buckled beneath me. I crumbled in a heap on the floor.

I love you. I'm sorry.

*Inspired by "Chairs Series IV," 1992, oil on paper by Carol Rosenak*

## Second Place: High School: Fiction



### Colors

By Kienna Kulzer

She came through the front door of the apartment hungry and overheated. It was her first night in the city; she hung the bag from the Art Museum Book Shop on the hooks in the corner, fanning herself with the freed hand as she collapsed onto the bed. Every part of the walk she had taken seemed to have left her with some sort of souvenir. She took the shawl she had bought from the woman at the corner off of her sweating shoulders and draped it over the chair, then set the basket of fresh produce on the floor beside her dirty, sandaled feet and laid back on her elbows for a moment.

The color of the room hadn't stood out to her until now. Everything was so vivid, so energetic, so enthusiastic. The painting on the wall danced in its frame, her collection of scarves glimmered in the dim lighting, the chaos of the streets below fluttered in the open window.

Her room was more alive than she was. A stranger would see this room and picture its inhabitant to be exotic, interesting, daring. They would never picture her. Plain, simple Emily, about as noticeable and sweet as faded floral wallpaper.

Emily...Emily who? Oh, her? Yeah, she's really, um, nice and smart.

Emily Landon? She's really good at math, never says much...

Emily, with the blond hair? You mean Terra's best friend?

Terra. There was no one she loved more. Terra, with her fiery red hair and rambunctious personality and sense of adventure. People noticed Terra as constantly as they looked through Emily. Best friends since third grade, and every second since Emily had wanted to be somebody else, somebody interesting, somebody extraordinary. Somebody like Terra.

The hypothetical stranger would picture Terra if they stumbled upon this room. Of course they would.

She sat up and grabbed the bag of cherries from the basket on the floor, biting them off their stems one by one. Best friends, but she had always felt like ...No. She refused to compare herself to Terra tonight. Terra was far away tonight, on a different continent, in a different city. She bit off another cherry. She could just stay in, like she did every night, and instead of thinking of Terra maybe she could finish up that sketch she'd started on yesterday. She stood up to grab her sketchbook, but paused mid-step. How could she ever be as exotic and exciting as Terra if she spent her first night in the city by herself in this room? A wild room, yes, but nothing compared to the world outside that open window! Setting the cherries down, she took the colorful shawl from the chair. It was so beautiful, almost mesmerizing. The soft fabric danced against her fingertips as gracefully as a ballerina. She threw the shawl around her herself, the colors flying like the wind and settling gently on her shoulders.

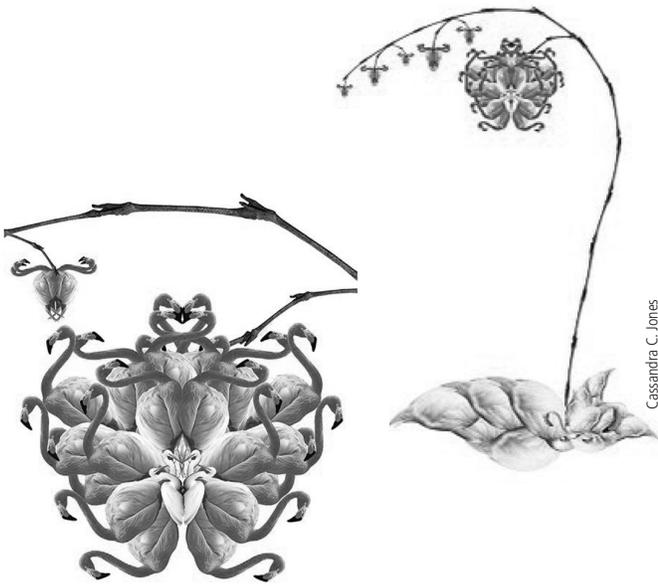
Her reflection in the window caught her eye. She didn't look plain or forgetful; she looked dazzling and daring and interesting. The shawl hung around her thin frame, masking her cut-off shorts and tank-top in a beautiful veil. Unable to stop herself, she did a little twirl and watched the vibrant colors spin around her like tropical birds.

She headed towards the door. The night was still young, it was summer time, and tonight she was not plain or boring. Tonight she was going to be spontaneous.

"Emily, where are you going?" the walls seemed to whisper.

I can't hear you, she thought. And I'm going to go on a little adventure.

*Inspired by "Chairs Series IV," 1992, oil on paper by Carol Rosenak*



## **Flowers of Life**

**By Garrett Pupa**

It is beautiful spring,  
Time for people to sing  
and flowers to bloom  
    ah but soon  
the most beautiful will arise  
and when you see inside  
    a hidden prize!  
One that cannot be seen by the naked eye

Yes it is a flock,  
a flock of the most beautiful birds  
They really do cause quite a stir  
The whole animal kingdom really was quite in a worry  
trying to get their spring coats washed in a hurry  
    boy it makes them wonder  
how are they supposed to compete with that!

Isn't it amazing  
    that life itself  
is the most beautiful flower of all

*Inspired by "Rara Avis Orchids," 2007, archival C-print by Cassandra C. Jones*

## Second Place: High School: Poem



Carol Rosenak

### What the Chairs Saw

By Cece Castañeda

Perhaps it was better that halfway through picking the tender young onions and corn  
You decided you did not want to spend your life waiting, and unborn.

So in a flurry you carelessly threw on us the vibrant cloth  
And got together all you couldn't care to leave behind.

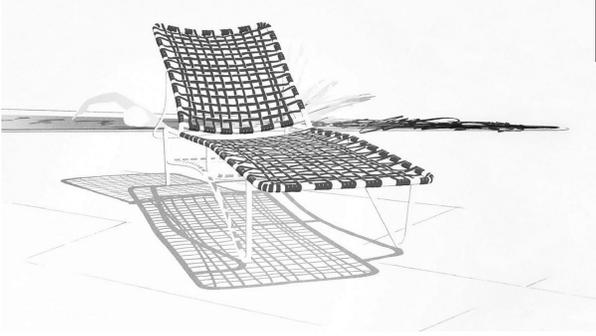
Not among it all is the  
Hummingbird trinket, nor the septet of tulips:  
They are signalers of spring in nature's birth  
But in your own life, they sat untouched, gathering dust.

So go then, and we will be waiting here  
If the day ever comes that you want to return and rest your weary self.

Sturdy and pure, we will stay here remembering the day  
You realized that your life was like a pair of ripened cherries.

*Inspired by "Chairs Series IV," 1992, oil on paper by Carol Rosenak*

## Third Place: High School: Poem



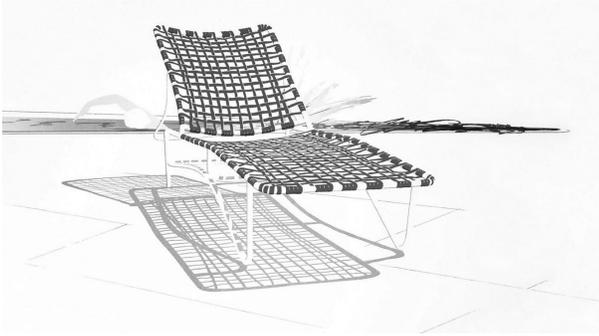
Bruce Freeman

### A Typical Day by the Pool

By Marco Cuevas

I see a blue chair,  
by the pool  
I feel the cool breeze,  
flowing through the air  
Though the placid water,  
looks so peaceful  
The soothing sun is warm,  
but not blistering hot  
This has been a perfect day,  
by the pool  
A now I have,  
an awesome tan

*Inspired by "Chaise Lounge," 1983, limited edition serigraph by Bruce Freeman*



Bruce Freeman

## **Expectations**

**By Maggie Westland**

A sun sieve, blue as the sea  
sits cool on a beach bleached  
clean as papyrus

invites me to shadow its  
shade, block ray's  
dissolution.

A blue mesh melds  
with the waves, weaves  
patterned precision

its ribbons entice and  
excite, extend promise  
of leisure.

I am there in the splash  
in the hurry to move  
across canvas

my arm like the arc  
of the sun in the last  
grasp of evening

taking my leave  
of land and its sands  
of allusion.

*Inspired by "Chaise Lounge," 1983, limited edition serigraph by Bruce Freeman*

## Second Place: Adult: Poem

### Blind Faith

By F. Albert Salinas

She's bronzed,  
Upright, blindfolded,  
scales swing from her left hand.  
She raises a double-edged sword.  
Her armpits are shaved.

You exit the Ventura County Jail,  
stop at the Lady Justice water fountain;  
spit clings to her cheek.  
She's a sculpted erotic personification  
of the morality of judicial systems.

Hunched forward  
under the weight of the world.  
Her arms outstretched for balance;  
Scales of justice sway  
from pierced wrists.

Lips vandalized, spray-painted  
a glossy blood red smear,  
Legs bound in gold chains—  
Carnation pink toenails.  
She wears US map cut out pasties.

Her breasts glow brilliantly.  
She is propped by a sword  
at her abdomen or  
committing Seppuku.  
The sun rises behind her.

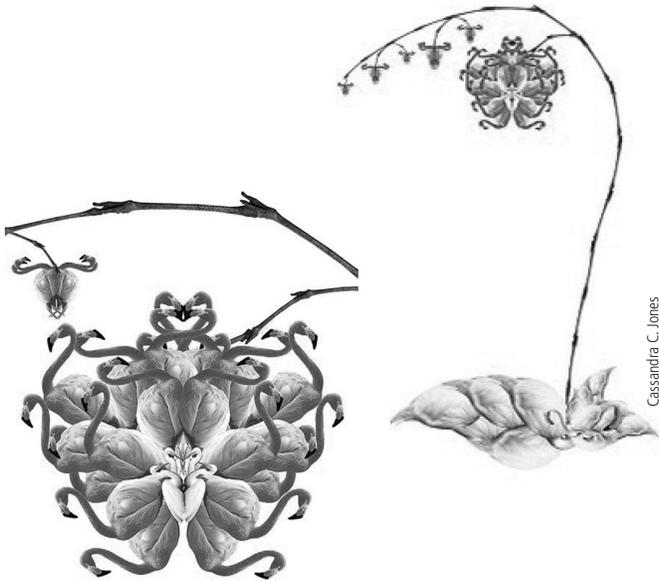
You hear a zipper,  
The basin of the fountain  
glistens golden,  
Toss in a good president  
and make a wish.



Lee Hodges

*Inspired by "Approved," 2001, mixed media on paper by Lee Hodges*

## Third Place: Adult: Poem



### Raramor

By Tim Pompey

Imagine me dangling just beyond  
as you reach to gather feathers and flora  
and shape them in a round bouquet  
so airily cradled.

Inhale and we are folded eye to eye  
bathed in reds flowing breast to breast  
like blood spanning from the same heart  
through the same arteries.

But hang as I will, what remains:  
An empty leaf. Veiled white light.

*Inspired by "Rara Avis Orchids," 2007, archival C-print by Cassandra C. Jones (b. 1975)*

*The City of Ventura*

# Municipal *Art* Collection

In May of 1999, the City Council established the Municipal Art Acquisition Program to document the history of visual art in Ventura through the annual purchase of important works of art created by area artists. The collection provides increased access to art of the highest quality and of distinctive merit through its display in the public areas of City Hall and other municipal buildings. Featured artworks must be created by artists residing in Ventura County or who have made a direct contribution to the history of art in Ventura County.

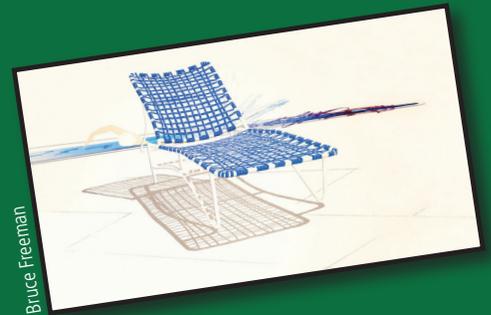
The Municipal Art Acquisition Committee, a sub-committee of the Public Art Commission, oversees the purchase of works in a variety of artistic media. The Public Art Commission plans to expand the collection in future years.

Ventura's Municipal Art Collection is exhibited in City Hall, 501 Poli Street, in the downtown Cultural District during regular business hours, closed alternate Fridays.

For more information visit [www.cityofventura.net/publicart](http://www.cityofventura.net/publicart) or call 805/658-4793.



Carol Rosenek



Bruce Freeman



Lee Hodges



Cassandra Jones



Joseph Piasenti

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