

Corpus Callosum

Ebling Library's Journal of the Arts



Spring 2026

On the cover

Rainy Day in The Prairie (As Above, So Below)

Emily Kammerud, BS

School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Pathology and Lab Medicine
2026

Poured & Blown Acrylic on Wood, 10" x 12"

Corpus Callosum is published by the Ebling Library for the Health Sciences of the University of Wisconsin Madison's School of Medicine and Public Health twice a year. Views expressed in this journal solely represent the views of the artists who made them. Published works are not edited in any way by the editor for publication. All artists are aware of HIPAA compliance requirements when submitting and publishing and all artists claim no use of generative artificial intelligence for any aspect of the art when submitting for publication.

Spring 2026 Issue

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Table of Contents

Artist Interview:

Six Questions with Emilyne (Emily) Kammerud 7

Art:

Begin at the End by Gregory Hollman 10

Brain Freeze by Ryan McAdams 12

Breathing by Joy Moy 13

Coneflower Cathedral by Vincent Cryns 15

Failed Crossing by Sharon M. Van Sluijs 16

Frosted Desert by Brent Clark 18

The Holding Cell by Caroline Mork 19

Migrating Loon in Amber Waters by Brianna Bohnsack 21

Portals by Andrea E Gouvea 22

Rainy Day in the Prairie (As Above, So Below) by Emily Kammerud Cover

Self-Portrait, Studying by Aubrie Torhorst 23

The Way Home by Rebecca Brockman-Schneider 24

With Dad, on the Beach by Molly McBride 25

Six Questions with Emilyne (Emily) Kammerud

Emilyne Kammerud (her shortened name Emily is used in *Corpus Callosum*), Academic Program Specialist in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine-Education of the School of Medicine and Public Health, has several of her paintings published in *Corpus Callosum*, including *Flayed Human Back* ([Spring 2022](#)), *Icteric Sclera* ([Fall 2022](#)), *Tache Noire de la Sclerotique (Black Spot of the Eye)* ([Fall 2023](#)), *Human Heart* ([Spring 2024](#)), *Traumatic Subconjunctival Hemorrhage as a Result of Asphyxiation II* ([Fall 2024](#)), and *Rainy Day in the Prairie (As Above, So Below)* (Spring 2026).

Question 1: What drew you to painting and what is your background in it?

Kammerud: After a rather tumultuous experience in nursing school (I have the heart for it, but not the mathematical ability), I changed my major halfway through college to Commercial & Fine Art—and I'm glad I did. I earned my Bachelor of Science from Carroll University.

I didn't paint much prior to college and initially found it extremely challenging. However, my instructor was so inspiring I decided to take three semesters of painting. While ceramics was my primary focus in college, I've since found that maintaining a painting studio is much more manageable—and affordable—in my basement.

Question 2: What motivates you to create and what inspires your art?

Kammerud: Creating art has always been a purging and processing experience for me. I'm not a terribly openly emotional person, but often find myself deeply emotional when creating. It helps me make sense of complex feelings and thoughts by pulling them from the ether into the 3D to further analyze.

Death and spirituality being a really profound fascination for me (and part of my career both in Pathology and as a Reiki Practitioner) brings up a lot of existential feelings and weighty questions about the body and death in literal and figurative senses. Essentially, what does it all mean?!

Before settling on acrylic pour-painting, I had tried various different media to capture the experience of an autopsy, but none came close to the real thing. As the autopsy administrator for our department for over seven years, I've definitely watched a few autopsies myself and am no stranger to dissection images. However, when I first started, I was shocked by

how little textbook diagrams look like the real thing—they are so neat, tidy, and uniform, and truthfully, an autopsy is anything but! There’s a plethora of colors, textures, shapes, and arrangements of internal viscera; it’s nothing like the textbook. I wanted to create something more accurate and was stuck in this paradox of creating actual images of anatomical dissection, which would be too graphic for the general public, and conveying the exquisite (and overlooked) beauty of it all in a more impressionistic way. So, I settled on pour-painting. It had gotten popular on the internet and mirrored the mess of fluids and colors of an autopsy. It took some finessing and a lot of experimenting, but the liquified acrylic allowed me to pull away from the textbook orderliness and explore that fleeting glance we take at something disturbing. That brief impression of curiosity amidst disgust.

Question 3: Do you have any favorite artists or art that have influenced you and who/what are they?

Kammerud: Otto Dix, Hyman Bloom, Zdzisław Beksiński, and Frank Frazetta.

I first connected with Otto Dix through a quote I found in an art history textbook: *“All art is exorcism. I paint dreams and visions too; the dreams and visions of my time. Painting is the effort to produce order; order in yourself.”* I felt seen! Interestingly, the father of one of the forensic pathologists I worked with at the UW actually sat as a model for Dix many, many years ago (quite synchronistic for me!).

I discovered Hyman Bloom while researching autopsy-inspired art. His experience working in morgues and his ability to depict death and decay through rich color and texture were especially compelling.

Zdzisław Beksiński’s work has a surreal, almost dreamlike quality that reminds me of childhood nightmares—they spark a little dark nostalgia for me, ha! There’s a strong sense of liminality in his art, which is a bit like death, the transition between a former and new state of being, that in-between where you have to leave things behind and have uncertainty of where you are going, which is ultimately very uncomfortable.

All have captivated me with their ability to provoke curiosity in the profoundly ugly, uncomfortable, and distasteful aspects of life. The things that, despite being very real, we are afraid to openly acknowledge, but can’t seem to resist peeking at.

And, of course, Frank Frazetta—his work is just incredibly dynamic and iconic.

Question 4: How do you balance your art with the rest of responsibilities in your life and does art help you in those other arenas of your life?

Kammerud: I do wish I had more time to create, but my art has been incredibly valuable in helping me process some of the more difficult aspects of my work—particularly in forensic contexts. It allows me to engage with those experiences in a reflective and meaningful way, while also satisfying my morbid (but also very wholesome) curiosity.

Additionally, I often contribute graphic design work within our department, which is something I genuinely enjoy and appreciate being able to incorporate into my professional role.

Question 5: What is next for your art (anything you are working on now or planning to)?

Kammerud: Recently, I've begun exploring the intersection of spirituality and anatomy in my work. As a Reiki practitioner, I'm interested in both the physical and metaphysical aspects of the body, and I've started incorporating those ideas into my paintings. I also love reading auras and creating digital paintings for clients to see their auras see for themselves.

Additionally, I've begun experimenting with non-anatomical pieces, including landscape-style pour-paintings, which has been a fun and refreshing expansion of my practice.

Question 6: Do you have any advice for anyone curious or interested in getting into art who hasn't before?

Kammerud: Do what feels good. It's easy to get caught up in the technicalities of the arts and compare our artistic abilities to others, but the most important step is simply to start exploring what you're drawn to.

If you don't consider yourself "creative" or "artistic," let go of that limiting belief. We are all creators in our own right, simply by existing. As humans, we create things, destroy things, solve things, meddle with things—whether we're artists, scientists, teachers etc. We're all creating our own realities, which is a bit weightier than simply putting pen to paper (figure of speech), so what do you have to lose?

Begin at the End

Gregory Hollman
School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Pediatrics
2026
Poem

Maybe if I start from the beginning, I can make sense of it.

When beginning starts at an end.

At seven days old your grandma Prairie died.

And you weren't even supposed to be here. Premature by four weeks, and tiny.

Your first couple days were at the hospital

Then you joined the five of us, Prairie, your mom, dad, uncle and me.

Nestled in one-bedroom apartment overlooking the Rocky Mountain foothills in Denver.

The way Prairie would have wanted

Thirty weeks earlier your mom announced you were coming.

Your grandma and I, a bit uneasy with the news, bittersweet and unexpected.

The first grandchild, within the range of the 1 to 2 years Prairie was given.

Months went by, you were growing well inside, and your grandma's life was full and good.

Then her headache, life came to a halt.

We knew this day would come. What it would look like we didn't know..

You were all of 34 weeks' gestation, six weeks to go, Prairie maybe three.

Doctors suggested to deliver you at 36 weeks' so you would meet your grandma.

Prairie would have nothing of it.

Then the stuff of miracles.

Somehow, deep down, floating in your amniotic broth.

Amidst the pulsating whisper of umbilical blood flow.

You heard and made your move.

At seven in the morning, your mom, the front of her sweatpants soaked

Said *I think it's happening; my baby is coming.*

Opening her eyes one last time Prairie, her last ounce of energy replied, *Wonderful*

Those were your grandmas last words.

You were born early the next morning.

On day two you met your grandmother.

The photo of you in her arms, forever etched in my mind.

You were at rest peaceful, your mom a mournful expression.

And your grandma, still, eyes vacant and a presence that only you could see.

Your grandma Prairie died 5 days later.

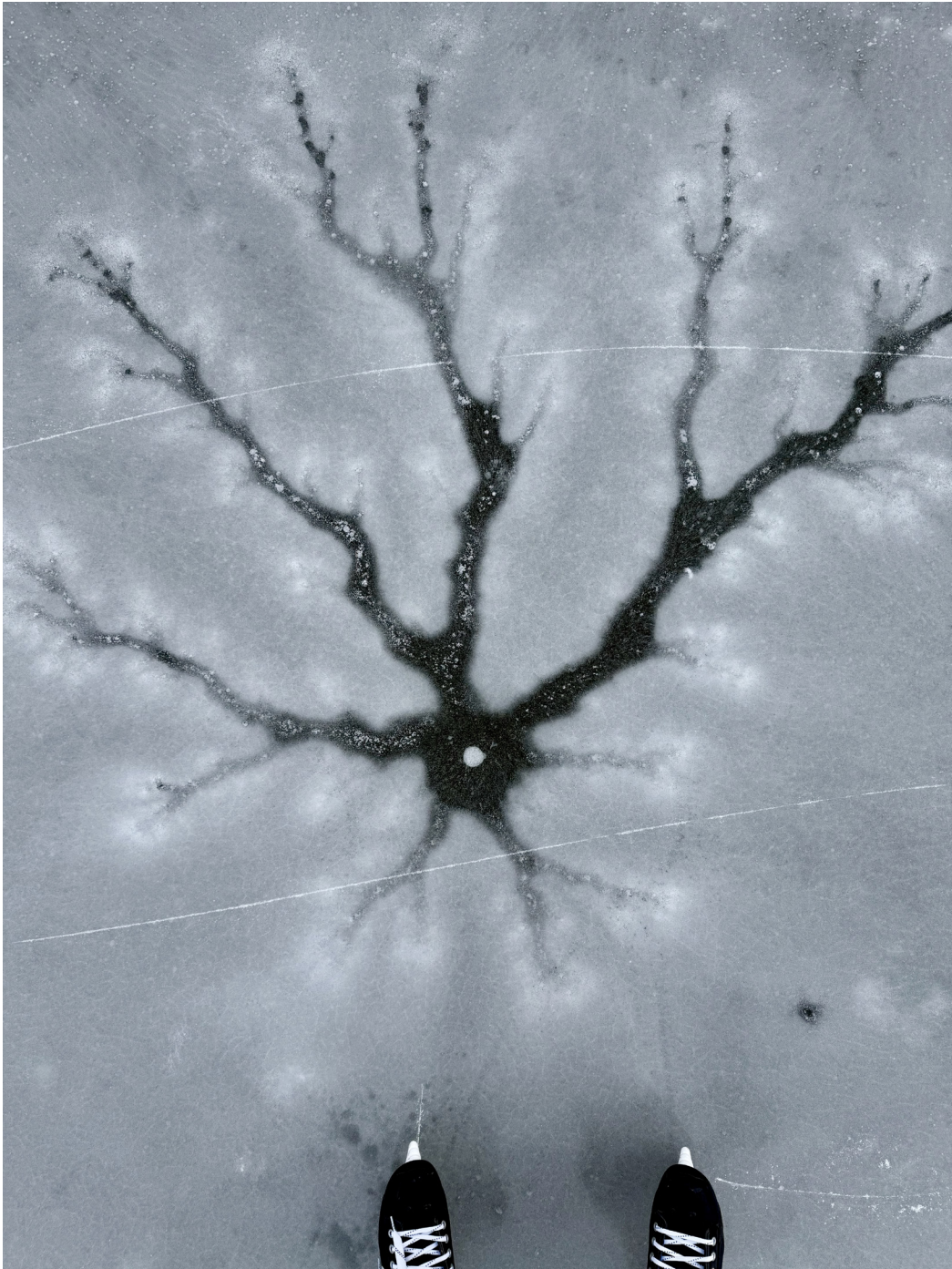
Your grandma called this time a "A Twisted Fairy Tale", I called it "Our Beautiful Year"

The photo it will not be one I will have you remember.

There will be others of Prairie for you, with stories of your her full of life.

Brain Freeze

Ryan McAdams, MD
School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Pediatrics
2025
Photograph



Breathing

Joy Moy, MD, MPH
School of Medicine and Public Health

2016
Poem

The room is so quiet that I can hear my
heart
beat
as it tries to match the unnatural steadiness of
your
breaths
punctuated by the
click
and hiss
of the ventilator.

We sit in silence
breathing together—
in,
and out
as we did that summer at Mackinac Island
when you took the time to teach me how to swim,
first, by teaching me how to breathe.

I remember my mother teased you about how your military style—
more drill than lesson—
hadn't changed a bit from the time you taught her all those years ago.
But, I appreciated that the order and discipline you commanded left no room for
fear
or doubt.

Reminding me to extend my then tiny hands as far as I could with each pull because,
“Hey, life’s too short to be tentative.”
And not focusing on the movement in the moment
means that you’ll start sinking once you realize that you’re surrounded by water with
nothing to grab hold onto.

If you focus only on the shore
you miss the instant your fingertips start to transform the chaos of each wave into
liquid
meditation.

That is what you taught me.

And, I realize that this is what I want to tell you.

Between me
and you.

But words don't seem appropriate because you
were a man of actions,
and it's strange to see you now
so silent
and so still.

So instead,
I breathe with you.

In.

And out.

To let you know that I haven't forgotten.

Coneflower Cathedral

Vincent Cryns, MD
School of Medicine and Public Health
2026
Acrylic painting, 24" x 30"



Failed Crossing

Sharon M. Van Sluijs
School of Medicine and Public Health, Department of Pediatrics

2021
Poem

They appear daily on the asphalt roads,
the bodies — chipmunk, squirrel, possum,
wood chuck, weasel, fox,
coyote, deer. Failure to cross
the hurtling traffic.

Early this morning, it is
the mother
raccoon and her four kits,
all struck, killed at once
by some car, something
like yours, like mine.

I stop,

intent to pull them off
into the deep ditch grass.

As I lift them aside, so heavy
in death, I sense
a seeming whisper—

*You, in your two-legged uprightness,
in your self-regarding
consciousness—you are just
as we are,
as fragile, as disposable
as this—my lately
living physical body, and these
once perfect weanling babes,
as evanescent—you are.*

*And though this moment may
mark you, leave you disconsolate,
breathless, stricken—
this is the way,
the all of it.*

*Therefore,
breathe into and know
this moment. Act. Make
your naked
flitting
human life
as marvelous, as consummate
as was ours.*

Their still-cooling bodies
rest deep
in the dew-damp grass.

How lithe their fingers!
How exquisite
their still perfect hands!

Frosted Desert

Brent Clark

School of Medicine and Public Health, Informatics and Information Technology

2026

Photograph



The Holding Cell

Caroline Mork
School of Pharmacy
2026
Poem

They take me to the holding cell.
The nurse wiped the cold gel off as I wiped the single tear that trickled down my cheek.
I folded my gown and placed it back on the bed.
They might as well have handcuffed me there.

At 22, there was a growth.
She broke the margins! She colored outside the page!
She was wild and chaotic and heterogeneous.
25x13x29
Chained to my tissue
She sucked the life out of me

They put me in the holding cell.
Surrounded by pamphlets screaming
You have breast cancer. Now what?
Who? Me?
Pink. Hues and swirls of pink.
Flowers, pretty flowers and women smiling.
What are they smiling for?
A box of Kleenex on each side table, anticipating

The clock keeps ticking as time slows.
3 minutes. Then 5. And 7.
The radiologist enters the room.
One mass is a fibroadenoma
But
I read his face
There is another mass
That is untamed and raging
We need to biopsy
Moderate suspicion for malignancy

What's the difference between low, moderate, high?
Is moderate an average score?
Why are you grading me
Why are you suspicious
And why is my body a crime scene

The words bleed.
I am 22 years old.
Alone in this holding cell
Surrounded by these smiling women
The pink shouting
I am handcuffed to my own body, who has betrayed me.
I wish my mother was here.

Migrating Loon in Amber Waters

Brianna Bohnsack, PHR
School of Medicine and Public Health

2025
Photograph



Portals

Andrea E Gouvea
School of Medicine and Public Health

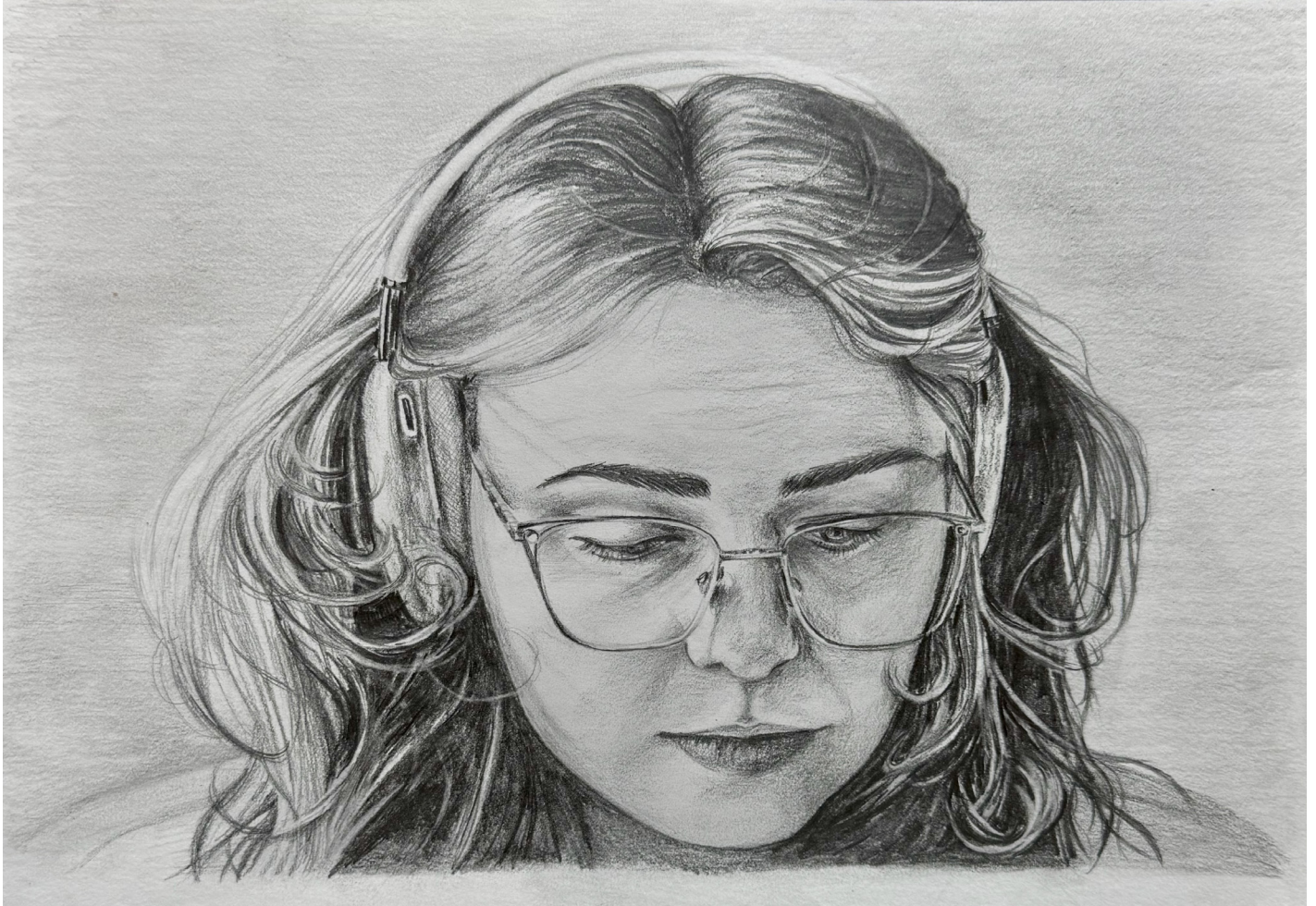
2024

Mixed media collage (magazine clippings, paper, adhesive) on cardstock, 14" x 11"



Self-Portrait, Studying

Aubrie Torhorst
School of Medicine and Public Health
2026
Graphite on paper, 8" x 12"



The Way Home

Rebecca Brockman-Schneider, MS
School of Medicine and Public Health

2025

Pastel, 11 3/4" x 13 3/4"



With Dad, on the Beach

Molly McBride

School of Medicine and Public Health

2026

Chalk pastel and colored pencil on paper, 11" x 17"

