Artist Statement
Audrey Ancell

I find a great deal of inspiration in science and technology, along with the positive and negative implications of these on people and the natural world. There is something very beautiful about the constant search for truth, the wonder and awe at the world. We want to understand it on every level. We want to deconstruct it down to its most basic elements, and then reassemble it again so that it makes sense. I use this same basic idea in my art. I am always searching for answers, questioning what I see and think. It grows as I do, it is constantly evolving. It is always trying to prove itself wrong in its most sure state. It is life.
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<td>&quot;Strangers on a Train&quot; Book Cover Design</td>
<td>Digital Illustration</td>
<td>InDesign, 20x9 in</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Card Deck Media Project for Smithsonian Institute, American Scientists</td>
<td>Digital Illustration</td>
<td>Illustrator, each card 4x7 in</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Descender Movie Poster</td>
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<td>Poster for Branding Project</td>
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<td>Wired Magazine Spread</td>
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<td>Self-Mailer, Tahiti Travel</td>
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<td>Tempest Packaging Project</td>
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<td>Tempest Logo and Uniform Project</td>
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Figure 1: "Strangers on a Train" Book Cover Design.
Figure 2: Card Deck Media Project for Smithsonian Institute, American Scientists.
Figure 3: Descender Movie Poster.
Figure 4: Anti-Fracking Poster.
Figure 5: Poster for Branding Project.
HARD TARGET

BY BRENDAN I. KOERNER

BECAUSE IT’S SO late on a Monday afternoon, there is a hushed vibe inside the University of Washington lecture hall where Jim Olson is about to speak. The audience consists of a few dozen grad students struggling with end-of-quarter fatigue. They scarf down free chocolate-chunk cookies as they prepare to take notes, but sugar can sharpen mental alertness only so much. The talk they’re about to hear, part of a weekly series on current topics in neuroscience, doesn’t exactly seem like edge-of-your-seat material.

Olson’s first slide wakes them up. It is a stylized photograph of an adorable 6-year-old boy named Hayden Straus, who suffers from a rare, progressive brain tumor. Hayden, who spent a white Quaker T-shirt and a pirate-style eye patch, Hayden, who suffered from a progressive brain, came to Olson in 1995. Back when Olson was just starting his career as a pediatric oncologist and cancer researcher. For four years, the doctor treated Hayden with successive rounds of chemotherapy and major surgeries, but nothing could save the boy’s life. Olson tells the audience that while sitting in the back row at Hayden’s memorial service, listening to the speakers express their pain, he had an epiphany about his scientific priorities.

“I decided that I would never design an experiment just to get grants or publications or promotions,” says the 51-year-old Olson, whose subtly complicated and Midwestern gentleness gave him the aura of a kind youth minister. “Every experiment I ever did was going to be to make sure that other boys and girls didn’t have to go through what Hayden had gone through.” Having been caught off guard by the emotional wallop of his opening story, Olson’s audience rises up as he goes on to describe a decade-long quest to solve one of the most vexing problems in oncology: the fact that a tumor’s precise boundaries are nearly impossible to define during surgery. A preoperative MRI provides only a rough

guide to a tumor’s fuzzy edges; this scan often misses pieces of cancer that seamlessly blend into the surrounding tissue. Surgeons often face a brutal catch-22: Either cut out any suspicious tissue, an approach that can lead to debilitating side effects, or risk leaving behind malignant cells that will eventually kill the patient.

Olson tells the students that he finally has a solution. His laboratory at the renowned Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, located just down the road from Seattle’s Lake Union, has developed a compound that appears to pinpoint all of the malignant cells in a patient’s body. It gives those cells a bright fluorescent glow, so that surgeons can easily spot them in the operating room. Olson calls the product Tumor Point, and it comes with a surprising twist. The compound’s main ingredient is a molecule that is found in the stinger of Leucos, a scorpion more popularly known as the deathstalker scorpion.

A scorpion venom concoction that makes tumors glow sounds too outlandish to be true. At least that’s what the grant-making organizations thought.

A scorpion venom concoction that makes tumors glow sounds almost too outlandish to be true. In fact, Olson explains, that’s what troubled the big grant-making organizations when he came to them for funding. But when those organizations dismissed his idea as too bizarre, Olson started accepting donations from individuals—particularly the families of current and former patients—quickly raising $1 million for his research.

Illustration by Audrey Ancell

Figure 6: Wired Magazine Spread.
Figure 7: Mexico Poster Exhibition Entry.
Figure 8: Self-Mailer, Tahiti Travel.

Tahiti:
Just the word conjures up centuries’ worth of images:
hustling flowers, suave, bronzed dancers in grass
skirts; a balm breeze over turquoise sea. The islands
of French Polynesia became legends the minute the
first European explorers reached their home shores
with tales of a heaven on earth where the soil was
fertile, life was simple, and sea was plentiful and
guilt-free. While the lingering hype is outdated,
French Polynesia is still about as dreamy as reality
gets. The trees are still heavy with fruit, the mountains
rise as majestically as ever and the lagoons are just as
blue.
Read more: www.tahiti.com
Figure 9: Tempest Packaging Project.
Figure 10: Tempest Logo and Uniform Project.