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Cover image, “*Guts of a Human Hand: Old Anatomy Under a New Technology*,” by Diwash Thapa

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## Editor's Note

It feels so different from just one year ago when we published the eleventh issue of *Iris*. There are now boosters and more boosters. There are the bottom halves of faces I had never seen in my classmates and advisors. There are other respiratory viruses that completely lost their seasonality. There are ongoing NICU bed shortages. There are offices with shared Keurig machines and donuts for the workroom. There are staff turnarounds and good-byes. There are women traveling too far for reproductive healthcare. We have found a new rhythm in daily uncertainty and what feels like the flavor of returning hope.

*Iris* is an art and literary journal which calls the University of North Carolina School of Medicine its home. After returning to activity again last year, I have been moved by the volume of submissions we received. This issue holds poems about formaldehyde and anatomy dissections, essays about essays, and photographs capturing seasons before they change.

I want to share an excerpt from an essay that I return to again and again.

*Once, in a dry season, I wrote in large letters across two pages of a notebook that innocence ends when one is stripped of the delusion that one likes oneself. Although now, some years later, I marvel that a mind on the outs with itself should have nonetheless made painstaking record of its every tremor. I recall with embarrassing clarity the flavor of those particular ashes. It was a matter of misplaced self-respect.*

*“On Self Respect” by Joan Didion (1968)*

Issue 12 of *Iris* is those particular ashes that hold this particular moment in time for all of its discomfort, anger, and hope. Thank you for opening this issue wherever you may be in the world and thank you to all the people who have contributed.

*- Yoshiko Iwai for the Editors of Iris: the art and literary journal.*