

SAINT MARY'S

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Illustration by Marc Cognan based on
photography by Dan Rosenstrauch



Visualizing Dante

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALLYSON WILEY '02

...Open your mind to what I shall disclose,
and hold it fast within you; he who hears,
but does not hold what he has heard, learns nothing..."

PARADISO, V: 40-2

A SMALL RENDERING OF PARADISO CREATED BY THE ARTISTS (BELOW). MURALISTS SUSAN CERVANTES AND ELLEN SILVA STUDY THEIR DRAWING BEFORE BEGINNING TO PAINT (RIGHT).



paradiso

"...I now see well:
we cannot satisfy
our mind unless it
is enlightened by
the truth beyond
whose boundary
no truth lies..."

PARADISO, IV: 124-6

THE POWERFUL IMAGERY of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is leaping off the page and onto the walls of Dante Hall, where artists are transforming the drab first-floor corridor with colorful murals of *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*.

Shawny Anderson, associate dean of the School of Liberal Arts, proposed the project in 2005 for a class which never came to be, but the idea resonated with the school's leaders.

"I always thought that the halls of the College should 'sing'

of the authors they honor," Anderson says.

The original inspiration came during Anderson's January Term class on "Street Art" when students touring San Francisco's Mission District were impressed with murals by the arts collective "Precita Eyes" and muralist Susan Cervantes.

With plans to renovate the 78-year-old Dante Hall during summer 2006, Anderson called Cervantes. A steering committee — Anthropology

Professor Paola Sensi-Isolani, Brother Michael Meister, Carrie Brewster of the Hearst Art Gallery, Joe Kehoe of Buildings and Grounds, and Anderson — met with Cervantes and artist Ellen Silva as they developed renderings and, in late November, began painting the murals.

To accompany the murals, Anderson and students pored over Dante's texts for "quotes that we thought would speak to students, whether or not they knew Dante."

More than 100 faculty, staff, students and alumni voted for their favorites from the dozens circulated, and the committee



chose those that best suited the images. The famous phrase "Abandon every hope, ye who enter here," inscribed on the Gate of Hell, will appear on the *Inferno* mural in its original Italian: "*Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch' intrate.*"

— Debra Holtz



THE ARTISTS' ORIGINAL RENDERING OF PURGATORIO. (RIGHT). THE MURALISTS DRAW THEIR PURGATORIO DESIGN ON A DANTE WALL. (BELOW)

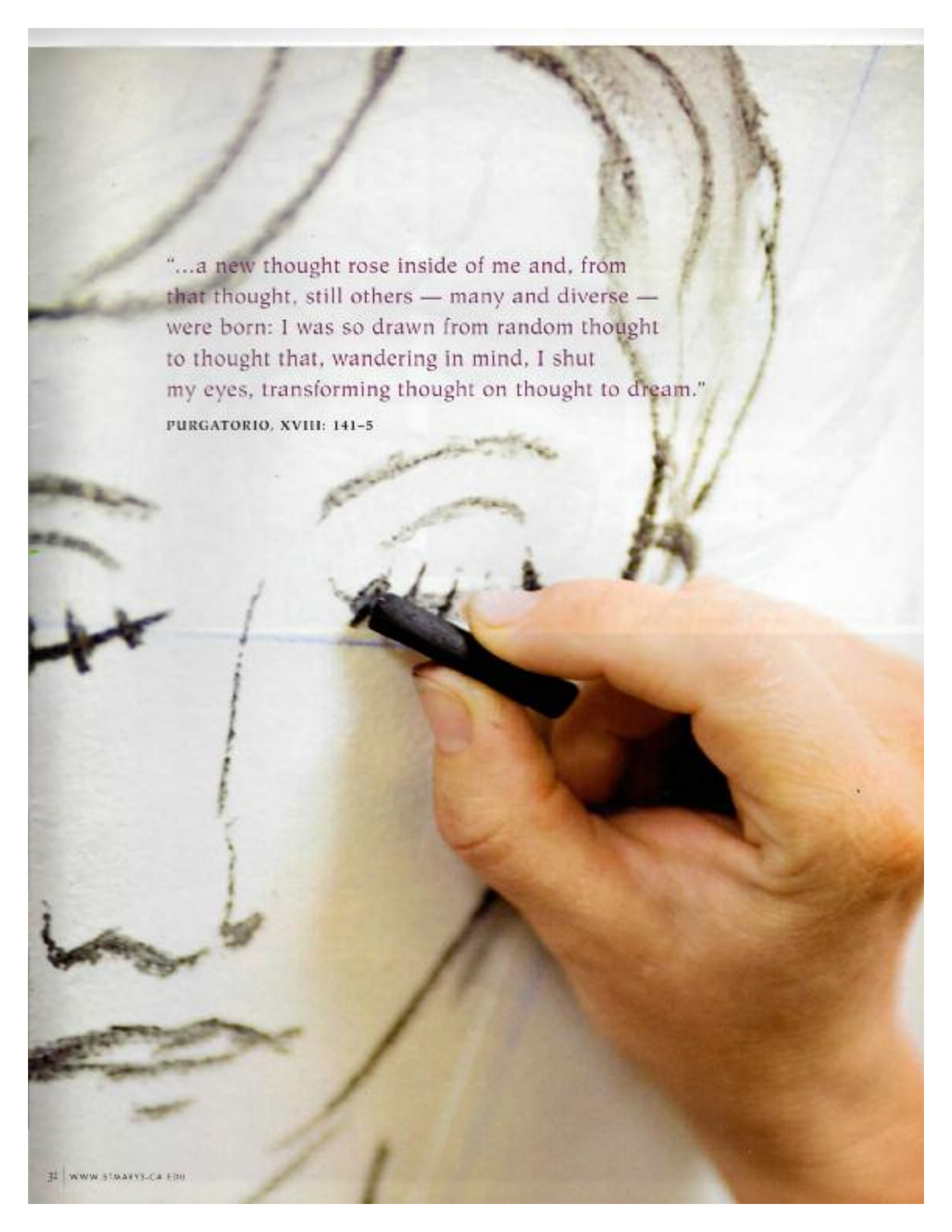


purgatorio

"My ignorance has never struggled so,
has never made me long so much to know..."

PURGATORIO. XX: 145-6



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a piece of charcoal, drawing a sketch on a piece of paper. The sketch consists of several curved, overlapping lines, possibly representing a face or a landscape feature. The hand is positioned in the lower right corner, with the charcoal tip touching the paper. The background is a light-colored, textured surface, likely the paper being drawn on.

“...a new thought rose inside of me and, from that thought, still others — many and diverse — were born: I was so drawn from random thought to thought that, wandering in mind, I shut my eyes, transforming thought on thought to dream.”

PURGATORIO, XVIII: 141-5



inferno



“Consider well the seed that gave you birth:
you were not made to live your lives as brutes,
but to be followers of worth and knowledge.”

INFERNO, XXVI: 118-20

DANTE'S APOCALYPTIC VISION IS DEPICTED IN THE COMPLETED MURAL OF *INFERNO*.

