

# IKEBANA

Ikebana, Japanese traditional flower arrangement, is the art of development from natural beauty into formative beauty. Ikebana is literally translated to mean, "flowers kept alive." Japanese flower arrangement had its origin in early Buddhist flower offerings and developed into a distinctive art from the 15th century, with many styles and schools.

Pine trees were used in the earliest times as the main material for ikebana in Japan. In time, the choice shifted from pine to cherry branches. A new sense of beauty emerged as flowers were introduced for an artistic touch. However, the short life of cut flowers meant that some new techniques were necessary. The import of pottery, such as vases and bowls, from China gave new ideas to the Japanese. They began to arrange flowers in a variety of containers which gave way to a new style called "rikka."

In the Edo period (1600-1859], free style was developed, "moribana" (flowers arranged in a basket or basin]. This style of arranged flowers and materials has been changed little by little over the centuries. Today, headmasters and headmistresses of schools do not hesitate to introduce modern concepts into floral design.

Currently, there are approximately 3,000 ikebana schools in Japan, with 15 million students. The most popular schools are ikebono (the oldest], Ohara and Sogetsu. After World War II, foreign interest and knowledge of ikebana became popular with wives of Allied military officers stationed in Japan. Many wives returned to their home countries as certified teachers or "sensei" of ikebana. This spread the influence of this style of flower arrangement throughout the world. An organization was founded in 1956, Ikebana International, which has over 10,000 members worldwide.

In contrast to the typically rigid symmetry of a Western-style flower arrangement, an ikebana composition is rather simple. Yet, the apparent simplicity of ikebana belies a sophisticated set of principles that unify the asymmetrical parts into a balanced and harmonious composition. Sogetsu ikebana features the idea that ikebana may be arranged anytime, anywhere, by any one and with any material. The school teaches that many beautiful flowers, the raw materials, are the products of mother nature. Ikebana, is the product of man's creativity and imagination in the arrangement of such raw materials.

The two main styles are: Basic Upright style and Basic slanting style. Each one is composed from three main stems known as shushi. The longest stem, the shin, determines the line of the composition; the next longest, the soe, supports the shin, while the shortest, the hikae, counterbalances the others to unify the arrangement. Supplemental stems, or jushi, compliment these main stems and give balance and fullness to the overall composition.

Ikebana can be roughly classified by the type of vase used for the arrangement. Ikebana in shallow containers are known as moribana, while those in tall vases are called nagerie. For moribana, stems and branches are inserted into a spiked metal holder called a kenzan, or pin holder. Nagerie arrangements are secured by manipulating the plant material itself, sometimes using props or supports fashioned out of branches.

To begin your arrangement, gather your material and container. Analyze your material by looking at the colors, the line of each stem and branch, the masses formed by leaves or blossoms. Then think of a way to rearrange these natural features into a fresh, original composition.





## A Weekend Away

This girl tells me, come see me this weekend in Park City. I say, I can't, I have no money. She says, come to Park City this weekend. I say, I can't, I'm poor, I'm trying to be a writer, I have to pay my car insurance this month. I feel impotent, I feel like I don't even have a fucking cock. Here I am in a dump apartment, eating Indian food out of a vacuum sealed silver bag, and I'm thinking, what the fuck. I think, she's gone. She's at a film festival and there's some actor there, and I can't even afford a plane ticket to go, and she's there, and there's some actor, some goddamn actor and she's going to swoon for him, swoon like Shakespearean swoon, like I can't fight it and you make my head feel too small and I'm fainting and waking up and looking at you.

So I say fuck it. I say that out loud, I say "fuck it" and I buy a ticket. It's a ticket I can't afford on a credit card that I haven't paid off, but I say fuck it and I do this thing, and I feel alive. I go out for a run, it's late and the air feels like cold beer, I'm running along the ocean, it's fifty degrees but I take my shirt off and I scream, I wake up some homeless guy who screams back at me, and I stop, and we scream at each other and he loves it, and I love it. And I run off, and he yells to me "you're going so fuckin' fast that your clothes fell off!" It's foggy and the Ferris wheel on the pier rises out of the fog, a hulking behemoth idol to the cock I've got that books a plane tickets, and music drifts through the night from the big top circus tent in the parking lot nearby.

Back at home, I send her the confirmation, in the subject line I write "I mean, fuck it" and in the body I write "you only live once, right?" I've done something big, this gesture is beyond my control. She writes me and says she didn't think that I'd book without checking logistics first. I say, logistics

be damned. There's nothing logical about this trip. I've been on one date with you, there's nothing sensible about this, and that's why it's worth doing, that's why it makes sense. The nonsense of this act is the only thing that makes it worth doing.

I say, here's the logistics. I'll be at the Egyptian theater in downtown Park City at two am Friday night. I'll be wearing a green parka and smoking a Romeo y Julieta cigarillo, and you'll either be there or you won't. I'll wait fifteen minutes, and then execute my contingency plan. What she doesn't realize is that there is no contingency plan. Having a contingency plan cripples the spirit of the act. Fuck contingencies. The contingency plan is I'll go and I'll drink with people I don't know, or I'll take a bus into Salt Lake City and try to seduce some Mormon girl, I don't know, I'll stay up all night walking around and I'll get sick from the cold, but this fever, whatever this sickness is that I get, it will break the spell of mediocrity that's suffocating my daily existence.

She says, you probably shouldn't come, I'm not ready for this. Space, she says. I want to have some space, I'm a very independent person, I don't want to answer to anyone, I want to be able to live my life, to meet strange and exotic men without guilt, I want to book plane tickets on a whim and leave everything. Nobody wants space, people just want the absence of space with the right person. There are people that you would give up space for because you want to be a part of the person they are, you think they'll help you be the person you're meant to be, but for her, that person is not me. Me, I don't want space. I have all the goddamn space I need. I want less space in my life. I forget what it's like to lose that space and be a little uncomfortable. I forget

everything about being too close. Everybody wants space, nobody wants to hear I love you, unless they say it first.

says to me, find Christ. I tell him that Christ and I don't get along anymore and he says fuck you. That's not a very Mormon



So yeah, I show up at the Egyptian anyway, even though she said all these things to me, because the poetry of the night and the act demanded it, the alternative was to slip back into the routine of the same bar in the same pseudo-artsy neighborhood filled with people name gaming to establish their relevance, and that option wasn't an option at all. And as promised I light up a cigarrillo and I take a long, slow pull, hold it and let it dribble warm out of my mouth. I look around and the street is mostly empty. I take a hundred dollar cab ride back to Salt Lake City and the cabbie

thing to say, I say, and he says fuck you. I say, Christ be with you, and get out at a dump motel near the airport.

I get a room and it is quiet, and the quiet echoes so loud that I can't hear a goddamn thing but the noise of quiet. I lay on my back in the exact center of the bed and I feel the universe expanding at the speed of light, I feel the space growing so big it's swallowing me whole. I close my eyes and wake up suddenly and all the lights are on and that goddamn quiet is still bouncing around off the walls like a fly in a jar.

# A Little Proxemics

Personal space, the area, which a person considers their domain or territory, can be expressed in everything they do. The way they greet, from a formal bow or nod to hug and kiss; the way they dine, from sharing a table to a tray; the gap they leave when they sit, whether inches or feet; the intensity of their eye contact, ranging from looking intensively to avoiding eye contact at all, show cultural personal space preferences.

Personal space might say a lot about individuals' relationship that it can be taken as a kind of non-verbal communication. You might be very alert about keeping your own personal space untouched, but at the same time you might allow for some intimate people to enter your socially accepted boundary which will send a signal about your relationship with that person to other observers.

The study of personal space preference differences in different cultures is called proxemics, which was introduced by anthropologist E.T. Hall, in 1963. In some cultures personal spaces are so wide that you are reminded about them all the time and feel uncomfortable, and in others they are so small that you might feel invaded if you are unaware.

I believe that proxemics is a broad study which requires an extensive study of different aspects of a culture to clearly understand the amount of personal space present. In this writing, among the various existing Ethiopian cultures, I will merely take one and try to show the amount of personal space apparent with regards to dining. It is important to keep in mind that there always exist personal preferences and differences with in culture, which might go





against the culture itself.

You can always eat on your own, but when it is served in a big tray with different kinds of stews and vegetables, it is most likely that it is served with other people to share with. You eat from the same tray with people you know or in some cases with people you have never seen before in your life! This happens for example, when you are a visitor in someone's house and if other people also happen to be there. It is so natural for the host to introduce you with the other guests and to serve the food together on a communal tray.

You just have to be careful to show that you have properly washed your hands, to use only your right hand, not to stick your fingers in your mouth in your attempt to eat, not to lick your fingers no matter how temptingly tasty you might find the food to be and you should also avoid belching loud. Even if you might like to be served alone, this is something you should keep for yourself and do it in your own home. You are at the mercy of the guest now and you will be considered rude if you show you don't like that.

The only space you might claim as your own on the tray is the space right in front of you. It is considered inappropriate for anybody to go across the tray and take any portion of the food in front of 'traymates'-it is like there is an imaginary boundary line drawn. As you can see from the above picture, there are different kinds of food items at the different edges of the tray and it is only when the person who sits by that side invites you to take a portion from that side that you are allowed to cross their boarder. You might do the same to show more friendliness. In cases where you are intimate with the people sharing the food, there is a way of showing your intimacy and love even more.



This is performed by an action called 'Gursha' which means feeding someone else using your own hand, and it is also used as a noun form of the action. You prepare an appropriate size and portion of food and put it in the other person's mouth. The action breaks any individual space what so ever present at that moment, hence shows a big proximity. It is absolutely impolite to refuse taking 'Gursha' even if you don't like it. It will be interpreted as being cold to the person who is trying to feed you. It is like refusing to let the person in your precious boundary sending a message that you don't trust him/her.

These is among those things that make adapting to other people's cultures quite tricky-compromising your own convenient personal space for the sake of not invading someone else's, or for not appearing too cold and indifferent. It might be a good idea to do a little bit of proxemics before we hit the road thinking we are fully equipped to enter into a new culture.

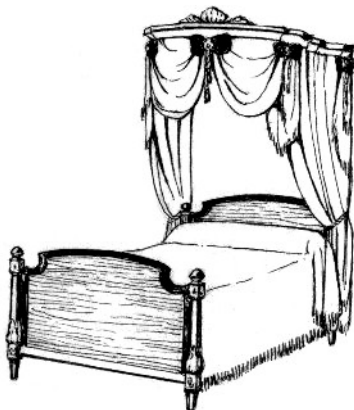
# Space, the final frontier.

Humanity has explored most of the earth. Various crevices remain enigmatic in our quest to uncover the mysteries of our planet, such as the pacific ocean and France. In recent attention from our bio-sphere to space exploration.

Before you get all Star Trek, Space Balls and Deep Space Nine on me, lets clarify what I am talking about. There are a number of questions that I could base this text on. Is time travel possible? Are we really in a 'space age'? Have people actually made it to the moon? Does time slow the further into space we travel? Did Ripley really get mugged off by load of giant ants? My topic is a much more important and an age old mystery.

The final frontier, for me, of space, is found in the bedroom. I am not interested in the plausibility of 'warp speed' or whether some random person (9/10 from Texas, USA) has been abducted by little green men.

What I do find very interesting, and foil to the idea that singularities (black holes) suck every form of matter surrounding them into a giant hoover like core, is the space between a couple in the sanctuary of the bed. That's right one of life's great mysteries is that magical area that appears in a bed when a couple go to sleep.



To start, lets discuss the some dynamics of a bed. Unless you are unabashedly garish, the shape is similar across the globe - rectangular. It is a beautiful creation that helps us to rest and play.

When slumber encroaches, usually a couple will lie in bed all happy and cheerful. Sometimes, even lovingly. Then this interesting phenomenon happens. Both of the two bodies start to repel each other. And within an hour of falling a sleep both bodies can be found at the extremities of each side of the

Space.

Not only is a massive hole produced in the immediate space between the two people, this space is capable of huge repulsion. Almost like two magnets with the same magnetic field repelling each other further and further away.

This space or singularity is also capable of moving bed sheets, pillows and duvets without actually disturbing slumber. Even more impressive is it's ability to wrap one of the two people, head to toe, in linen that it has removed from the other party. This quite secular happening is an all to common occurrence.

A space that can manipulate time and objects so freely and deceptively is surely alarming and quite terrifying, especially considering it is gender specific. Its ability to fathom correctly which is the most feminine of the two people in the bed, and then manipulate the duvet, sheets and even sometimes the pillows so that they are snugly fitted to that person, is simply an amazing phenomenon.

The 'singularity' which has different properties to that of it's cosmic counterpart, does not have the presence to suck anything into it's core. Yet,

surprisingly, on occasion, it has been known to drain all emotion from the room. A 'survival of the fittest' instinctual behaviour follows and more often than not the female of the species proves dominant. The man is left to shiver and shake on the outside of the bed linen. Usually, unaware until woken from a frozen slumber, blue from cold, the man becomes despondent and moody for the rest of the day.

As I have given this very promising example of alternative properties of a black hole which is less cosmic than it's counterparts, I think that it is important for the great minds of this world to come together and use this example to modify or even reshape the theories of quantum singularities. These daily occurrences may seem unimportant but if we take a step backwards and study such things, we may be inadvertently take ten steps forward.

#### Note

It may be that because of this article the entire history of science is re-thunk. My shoulders are wide and I can take the responsibility of reshaping the thought of the mankind.

#### Disclaimer i

I spent a long thirty minutes researching this article, if some of the information is incorrect then it is due to the poor websites that I used such as <the\_Cambride\_Universities\_guide\_to\_complex\_stuff\_like\_gravity\_and\_cars\_moving\_and\_thing\_like\_that.com>.

#### Disclaimer ii

I was absolutely nowhere near Stephen Hawkin's residence on 25/12/2009 and nothing to do with robbin' 'is 'ouse. I also do not wear a red suit, eat cookies or weigh 320 pounds!

# Finding the Proper Productivity Producer

I have been on a quest searching for a space sturdy enough to support me reaching into our ethos, grabbing something and translating it into a form we can understand.

My culture has metamorphosed this space into a desk, and, rightly or wrongly, it is within that framework I have searched.

It began in adolescence, with one roughly six feet high, six feet across and four and a half feet deep. Below the writing surface to one side were some drawers, and above it shelves. The work area itself was not particularly big. I always felt cramped trying to read or write within those confines. I need physical space in front of my eyes to think clearly.

As I grew into a teenager, I upgraded to a far simpler model: two file cabinets with a big slab of wood on top. The area for work was doubled in size, and I wrote many terrible (essay on why my school failed me because of its lack of black students) and a few wonderful things (piece defending Jerry Krause's rebuilding of the Chicago Bulls) while sitting there, but it was not perfect - it accumulated too much clutter, which got in the way of productivity.

Most of college was spent forced back into a tertiary permutation of my childhood desk. Second semester Senior year I evolved, and with my friend's move out of our shared area, I had room for experimentation. There I took a step into the next dimension: intersecting two desks to create the "L".

It gave me a place to store my clutter close enough to access if needed, but left the main working area clear. Guided by the "L", I wrote the finest essay of my writing career evaluating E.M. Forster's evolution as a writer from his first novel to his last. I should have dedicated the piece

to the desk.

My first post-graduate working space to negotiate my reach into the ethos was already in the "L". The problem I came to face was not lack of productive space, but fatigue, due to my irregular sleeping patterns. Combining them with sitting all day was not a formula for success. The solution this time was jumping into the next dimension: vertical.

I was inspired by a colleague who placed his computer on top of a cardboard file box. I joined him standing all day, and stayed awake to enjoy my three-dimensional world.

The next relationship came in the Far East at my chilly, but big home in Japan. I arrived to discover the desk from my childhood waiting for me. Throughout the fall and winter I avoided it, preferring to lay on the floor with cushions.

Eventually I got fed up, visited the local hardware store and bought wood to construct a proper productivity producer. I purchased a slab and four legs, which spent the next two to three months sitting in my garage.

Finally, one evening in a less than sober flurry I assembled the beast. Sweating I rose, ready to show her to the world, but what did I have?

Curved wood supported by four spindly legs, ready to collapse at any moment. It did not fall, but only because I regularly readjusted the legs by pushing them inward, against their tendency to splay out on their own.

Once I decided I needed to begin actually writing, I deconstructed the monster and sawed her in half, ruthlessly and without emotion. Instead of mounting her slim form back on the flimsy wooden legs, I slammed her onto concrete



... blocks, which I stacked on top of one another. It was sturdy enough for me to stand on and push back the clouds to see our current ethos and bring back some fiction writing.

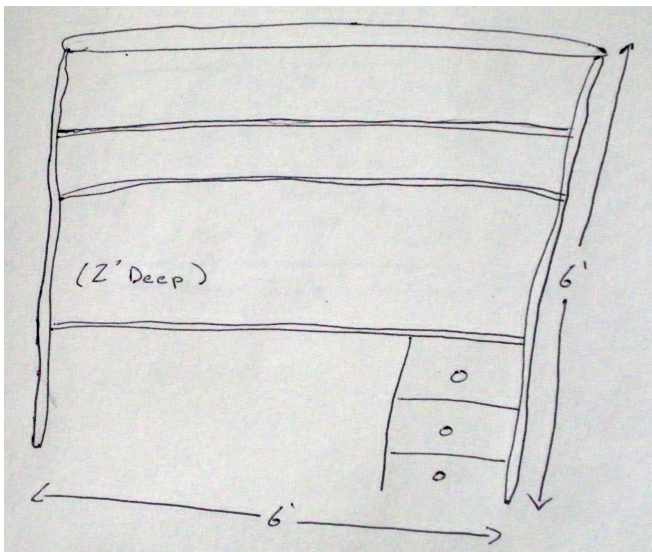
As I moved deeper East a few months later to China, I was met again by that "desk," thankfully, already in use as the center-piece of my kitchen. I was left with two simple desks. I moved them immediately into the "L", and my fiction writing picked up where it left off. Eventually though, I came to realize I was only using the second desk as a storage place for all the various tidbits I accumulated. This potpourri coupled with my computer on the opposing "L" length meant I never had space to write on the desk.

Slowly I came to realize a "L" alone was not enough, what I truly needed was a "U".

The bottom part of the "U" is for computer work, the desk to the left for stuff, and the one to the right for writing. In addition, I have a separate unattached desk that I use to store my books and read.

Does this progression down the alphabet imply I have finished my quest? No. As I grow to better understand how I work and what I need, I further refine what is productive for me. Eventually I imagine that will have areas for computing, writing, reading, an ability to move up or down depending on my fatigue, room to store everything I need to touch or see without actually getting in the way, an easel and space to play music. All the forms of human expression available instantly, but also never in the way.

Or, maybe I had it perfect already with my slab of wood on two file cabinets, I just needed to keep it clean.



# My Cassiopeia

*Author's Note: Many thanks to the late, great Italo Calvino, if not for whom the kernels of this story never would have entered my consciousness.*

\* \* \* \*

Gazing into the infinite blanket of space, cradled so delicately against our earth with the firm restraint of a mother embracing a newborn child against her soft and mysterious bosom, gently resolving differences...

I weep for this moment and all moments like these.

I point straight up into it, poke its milky dark underbelly in the dead of night.

*Up there.*

The earthling's face is inert. Pensive, a calm and purposeful expression crawls across her face. She is forming conclusions, re-examining the deepest moments of passion between us. She knows I always held the other, my whimsical Cassiopeia, in higher standing; always tacitly pursued the spiritually inexpressible with her despite my placating devotion to the earthling.

Now her cool grey earthling eyes cry upward with a slight squint. They follow an imaginary line that extends from the tip of my finger to the brightest star of the constellation named long ago for the one who loves me least.

*The one that shines brightest, two hundred and thirty-two light years away, and burns more than five hundred times brighter than our sun is my home. I named the constellation after my Cassiopeia when we first left our home there and came to see its true and full beauty from afar, distanced by the very extremes of Earth's orbit.*

I see it immediately: the seated queen does not impress her.

I again raise my hand,

pleading upward in supplication to the heavenly bodies that stand still while popping like a multitude of lightning bugs combing the soft meadows of the Milky Way.

Her eyebrows arch in furtive contemplation.

I continue.

*I've known Cassiopeia for most of my life, long before the planets and stars were formed, although she was not always called that. We used to gather on horizontal planes along the walls of the nebulas with the rest of our families, wondering what would happen with all this space.*

I embrace the expansive night sky with open arms and ostentatious sentiment. The earthling must know where I've been, where I am, where I'm going.

*And one day those walls we'd been living in started moving, and gaining momentum, fast.*

I am gaining momentum.

*Cassiopeia and I observed it all from afar. The brilliant creation of everything.*

Dewy moisture wakes me up, shimmering in agony at the edges of her grey globes, balancing precariously as if on the tip of a blade of her fair earthling grass.

Now tears. Her voice chokes forward, steadily dripping out the edges of her parched lips, dragging its feet lazily out of her mouth, but I cut it off before it can fully emerge.

*That's where we fell in love.*

And now that furtive  
earthling voice burrows finally  
through the cracked and dry  
surface of pursed lips on the  
heels of my final injustice: "Did  
she really love you so?"

I turn my eyes down.

"Because she's left you.  
She's found another lover."

*Where I fell in love.*

\* \* \* \*

The tremulous timbre of my  
inflection resonated across our  
physically distant bodies with  
muted timidity. My carefully  
measured words fall flat upon the  
broken air particles between us  
but I picked them up again, my  
latent fluctuations slicing  
angularly in anticipation of the  
devastatingly insouciant charm I  
imagined her response would  
contain.

But there was none. Her  
sweet pecan brown eyes instead  
craned ever so upwards to meet  
mine, precious in their emotional  
generosity, the candor pointedly  
inclusive yet ultimately  
insincere. I see it all now  
looking back, how they brought me  
in yet denied me the fundamental  
pleasure of incontrovertible  
truth.

Oh, my forsaken charm. How  
could I have not seen this  
coming? The growing indifference  
to life on Earth. The cups of  
nostalgia overflowing in baleful  
ambiguity. Avoiding  
confrontation.

And now this distance.

*What about all we've been  
through? Have you not come to  
love life here, on Earth, with  
me?*

I knew at once it was for  
naught. She never acknowledged  
the real me, brimming with  
desire, creeping around in the  
shadows behind exteriors ever  
since she showed up next to us on  
the nebula.

Now she acted like we never  
met.

But I refused to let her  
seep back into the night: *And all*

*the moments we've shared before?  
Are they to be annihilated by the  
overwhelming imperative of now?*

It was those sweet brown  
eyes, again, throbbing with  
palpable subtext, furiously  
suppressing the truth that had  
followed us since I'd first  
sensed her through billions of  
moments.

That was another such  
moment when I would treat her in  
every imaginable way as a being  
much dearer than a lifelong  
friend.

I wept for that moment and  
all moments like these.

She finally opened up, a  
recalcitrant voice to match the  
faded mauve begonia sticking out  
of her sea of docile curls, but I  
could not bear it, I interjected:  
*Forgo the anecdote.*

Nothing new under the sun.

But unlike the earthling,  
whose interests I recently  
started attracting and to whom I  
owe my peculiarly harsh,  
realistic outlook on life, my  
Cassiopeia had been at the mercy  
of swift caprice since the very  
beginning, but still I mutilated  
myself in the name of passion.

She formed the words in her  
head carefully before spilling  
them forth: "I am leaving Earth  
to go someplace far off in the  
distance. You've been my  
companion for so long yet that is  
it—only a companion. I was never  
your lover, no matter how often  
that reality hid behind the  
pretense of your actions. Does  
your earthling lover know how you  
really feel?"

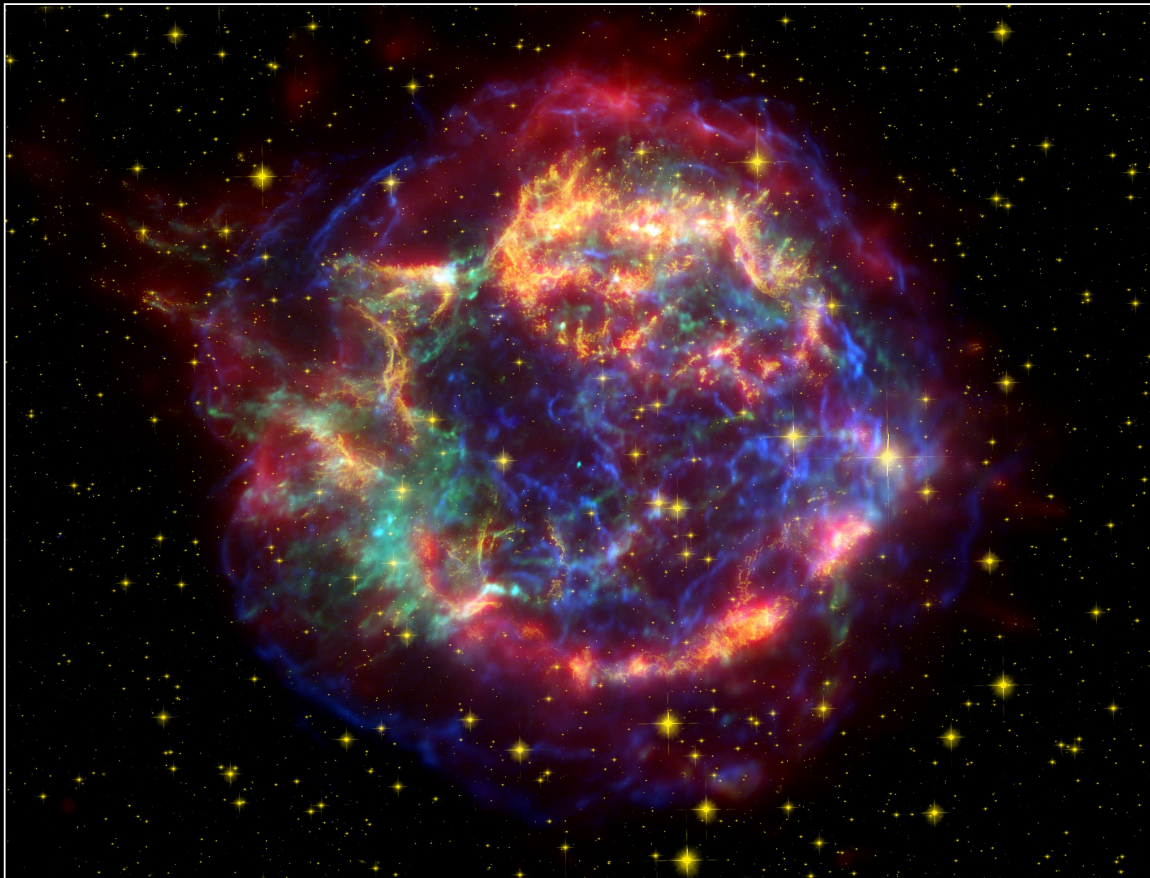
My crumpled body, limbs  
sagging forward, hid nothing.

"Run home."

And the seated queen arose  
and made her way, perpetually  
widening the distance between her  
and thirteen billion years of  
unrequited love.

But I determined right  
there that I would not let her,  
my Cassiopeia, become just  
another person that I used to  
know, even though I knew that  
could never happen.

Still, I'd die to please her.



**Cassiopeia A Supernova Remnant**

NASA / JPL-Caltech / O. Krause (Steward Observatory)

ssc2005-14c

Spitzer Space Telescope • MIPS

Hubble Space Telescope • ACS

Chandra X-Ray Observatory



# The Uncertainty Principle

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## Writing

page four

IKEBANA

Paula Danoff  
Winnetka, IL, USA

pages six to seven

A Weekend Away

J. Lunney, Staff Writer  
Venice, CA, USA

ages eight to nine

A Little Proxemics

Tigist Defaru, Original Writer  
Anqing, Anhui, China

pages ten to eleven

Finding the Proper Productivity Producer

Charles Jeffrey Danoff, Editor  
Anqing, Anhui, China

pages twelve to  
thirteen

Space, the final frontier.

Stuart Al Charles Brown, Original Writer  
Anqing, Anhui, China

pages fourteen to  
sixteen

My Cassiopeia

Jason Rezvan, Staff Writer  
Brooklyn, New York, USA

## Photography

pages two to three  
and  
eighteen to nineteen

SplatterPaintedPole

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page five

Photo and Arrangement

Paula Danoff

page seven

Egyptian Theatre at the Sundance Film Festival

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pages eight and nine

A Typical Ethiopian Dish and Gursha

Tigist Defaru

page eleven

The Desk and The “U”

Charles Jeffrey Danoff

page twelve

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page sixteen

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Charles Jeffrey Danoff, Editor

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