

mand more of her, for fear of chasing her into a void from which she might not emerge.

She was before me now, appearing surprisingly healthy with sweet, innocent looks that hid her desperate life. But she was agitated in the manner of someone who hadn't slept or eaten in days.

"I realize now that I'm an addict," she said to me. "I can't handle drugs.

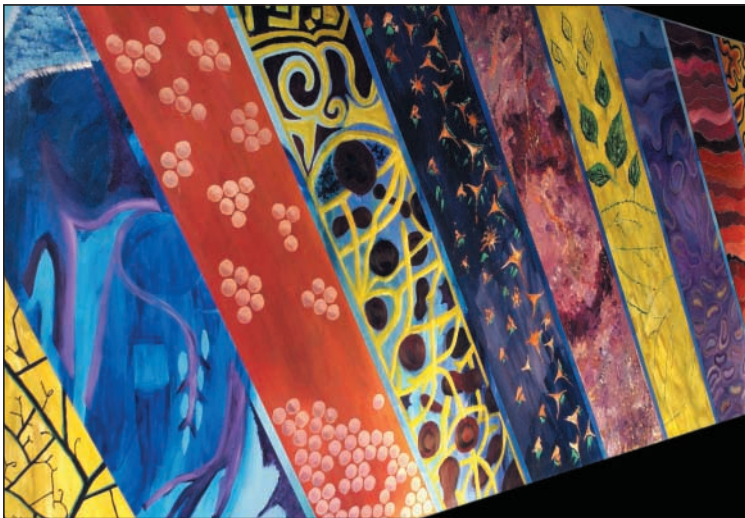
Some people can. They can take them and then stop. I can't. I can't stop. I keep using until there's nothing left. Well, finally, I can't anymore. This has to stop. I need to stop. There's practically nothing left of me. I need help now."

We shook hands, the young fellow and I, as he stood to leave. I watched

him exit the department, slipping his miniature earphones into his ears as he stepped out into the street. The evening sun cast a long silhouette behind him. His shadow, his addiction, followed.

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Lifeworks

Writing on the wall

Fourteen Dalhousie medical students worked literally from dusk to dawn recently to complete 2 murals that explore images and themes from the science and practice of medicine. The 8' x 16' and 8' x 8' acrylic-on-wood murals gracing the walls of their student lounge were completed during a day-long art marathon that lasted until sunrise on March 21. Led by Jeffrey Burns, artist-in-residence with the Medical Humanities Program at Dalhousie University, Halifax, the perennially time-pressed students liked the idea of a marathon. Although art marathons are held at other universities, creating a mural was definitely "more ambitious," said Burns, a professor at Mount Allison University in Sackville, NB. The students opted to use imagery from biology, nature photography and the medical sciences. The square mural depicts a "real and fantastic place" where science is integrated into the natural setting, while the rectangular mural is a composite of more abstract individual projects. "The challenge was to make that mural cohesive," says Burns, who is "very happy" with the results. "The students were really committed to it and it has generated a lot of buzz. The mural will live on and be a point of discussion about humanity and the arts," said Burns, who has been "exploring the territory where art and medicine converge" for several years. The marathon was supported by a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts. — *Barbara Sibbald, CMAJ*