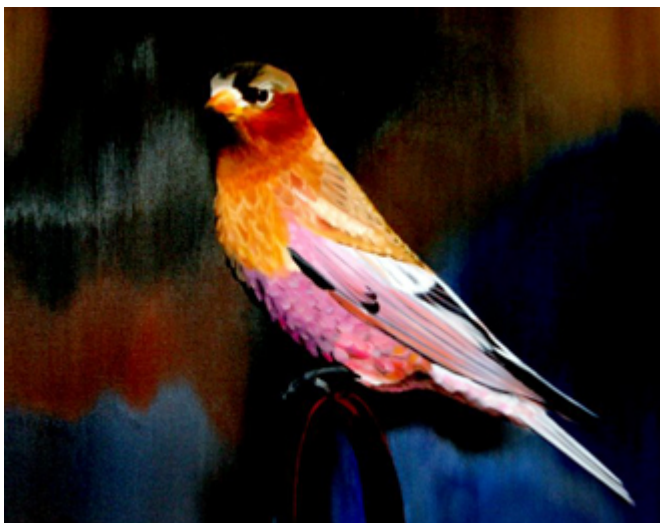


Creativity Takes Flight

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Dr. Paul Rodenhauser, professor emeritus of psychiatry at Tulane School of Medicine, had planned to teach until he was 70. But Hurricane Katrina changed his plans. He moved to Albuquerque, N.M., and took up a new career as a full-time artist.



"I'm So Pretty" is a painting of a brown-capped rosy finch by psychiatrist Dr. Paul Rodenhauser. It is among the works he has created since retirement from medical education. (Image from Dr. Paul Rodenhauser)

"Anything that shakes us up can be helpful, though it depends on the degree, I suppose," said Rodenhauser, who spoke on "Perspectives on Creative Expression From Outside the Box" at a lecture hosted by the [Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences](#) on Friday (Oct. 8). "Katrina helped me redefine myself." Leaving medicine behind, Rodenhauser is now a painter, photographer, potter and master gardener.

In his lecture on the health sciences campus, Rodenhauser spoke about the nature of creativity, the mental health benefits of creative expression, the encouragement and development of creative expression among physicians, and the history of physicians' involvement in the arts.

He discussed his personal experience in the arts — including his own suppression of artistic expression because of a career that he viewed to be 24/7 — and then his emerging career in the arts, postretirement.

While Rodenhauser was at Tulane, he helped found the Society Against Right Brain Atrophy. Though that organization isn't active currently, the medical students now have [“The Beat,”](#) a blog devoted to creative expression, and a performance group called Music and Medicine.

“It's not strictly music,” said Larissa Thomas, a third-year medical student who attended the lecture. “They've had dance, magic and comedy routines as well. There also is an a cappella group called Uvulae. As [medical] students we're definitely involved in the arts; it's one of the characteristics that drew me to Tulane medical school. However, Dr. Rodenhauser stated it quite well when he said that the challenge is to maintain those creative skills during school and in practice.”

Rodenhauser said, “Knowledge can be pulled in from various sources — not just from medical textbooks and lectures.” Recapitulating his view on the value of creative expression, he said, “It's enriching.”