

Outstanding Alumni

Rowena Amador, Mission College

This has been a good year for Rowena Amador. Besides graduating from Mission College with Highest Honors (3.985 GPA) in May of 2005 with an A.A. degree in Business, she is poised to complete her second semester of study at San Jose State University, where she is majoring in Business Administration with an emphasis in Management Information Systems (MIS).

To top it off Ms. Amador received notice that she'd been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship from the Jeannette Rankin Foundation. This foundation, based in Athens, Georgia, raises funds and awards scholarships annually to low-income women 35 years of age or older, who are in an undergraduate or vocational training program and have a vision of how their education will benefit themselves, their families and their communities.

Rowena's scholarship can be used to pay for tuition, books, housing and/or living expenses. She credits glowing recommendations from Mr. Richie Perez, former staff member of the college's ACCESS program, and Mr. Bob Miller, Head Counselor, for helping her application stand out. Ms. Amador had been a participant in the ACCESS, EOPS, MESA, CalWORKS and CARE programs at Mission.

Rowena lives in the Berryessa district of San Jose with her 5-year-old son, Jorryn. She is very thankful for the support she received from Mission College. You may also recognize her as a member of the Mission College Instructional Computer Support Team!



Ben Wood, West Valley College

Among the events surrounding the 100th anniversary of San Francisco's 1906 earthquake was a movie premiere honoring the city's firefighters. The film, directed by Ben Wood, a former West Valley College student was shown April 18 on the side of Coit Tower, a building resembling a fire hose. You can also see it online at www.sfcentennial.org, or visit Coit Tower on July 4th for a rerun.

A visual artist, Wood shows his art in a time and place where people are already thinking about a topic or theme. "I enjoy combining history with art as we are able to learn from the past," says Wood. "It brings up issues that may help us in the present and prompt us to think about how we should react to these issues now."

His projects involve interviewing numerous sources, investigating, and searching for images to create a unique visual statement. For this project he says, "I've been up at USGS talking with scientists and over in North Beach collecting historic imagery."

A few years ago he uncovered an ancient mural at San Francisco's Mission Dolores that inspired him to create a movie he also projected onto Coit Tower. "As a foreigner unaware of the Indigenous history of the Bay Area I wanted to learn more about contemporary people of Ohlone descent. This led him to Mission Dolores where he and archaeologist Eric Blind uncovered a mural dating back to the 1790s that was hidden behind the altar in the old mission. Wood digitally restored part of the mural, which is now on display in the Mission Dolores museum, as well as online at: www.missiondoloresmural.com.

Wood, who is British, came to West Valley College in 1999 as an exchange student. "At the time I was the only person in my program, (at Brighton College of Technology in the UK), combining computer graphics with fine art. One day my tutor told me about a possible trip to a place called Silicon Valley. Not even knowing where it was, I still jumped at the chance."

After West Valley he obtained a BFA in Digital Media from the San Francisco Art Institute. Now a student at M.I.T. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) he experiments with combining fine art and digital media with archaeology.

He credits West Valley College with giving him the skills to succeed in this experimental field. "I believe West Valley to be one of the best schools I have attended. The learning environment at West Valley encouraged me to pursue my artistic interests while developing technical skills in digital media. Not since West Valley have I been in an environment where I was able to sit down and learn how to use the tools, in class, and be able to experiment at the same time. ❖"

