

Roni Ziemba's Surgery Photos Tell Quite a Tale

From September 8th through the 11th of 2011, professional photographer **Roni Ziemba's** La Encantada-based photography exhibit "Stronger than Steel" was one of the showcase events of UAMC's annual "Celebration of Heroes," which honored first responders from around the Tucson area and also generated support for the **UAMC Level I Trauma Center**. Roni's stunning photos were taken during her many volunteer "ride-alongs" with first-response units around Tucson and were later converted to compelling art in her studio.

As her "ride-along" experiences with law enforcement officers, firefighters, military personnel, and others might suggest, Roni is no stranger to that uncertain terrain known as "in harm's way." She and her camera found themselves in Baghdad shortly before the first Gulf War; in Belfast, dodging bullets during an IRA uprising; and, in the middle of riots in inner-city Los Angeles. In each instance, her cool head and keen eye allowed her to capture powerful photographic imagery of the transpiring events.

Now, Roni has turned her insightful lens toward a new and challenging area: the medical arena—especially the surgical theatre, aka the operating room (OR). This directional shift was first revealed on the cover of the UMC Foundation's 2010-2011 Annual Report, published in November of 2011, which prominently featured Roni's photo of UAMC Trauma Center Medical Director **Dr. Peter Rhee** performing surgery.

Creation of this new medical body of work began rather serendipitously last fall, when Tucson attorney **Dev Sethi** was so impressed by Roni's "Stronger than Steel" exhibit (especially her images of Dr. Rhee in surgery) that it gave him an idea. He and his family had been searching for a unique way to celebrate the upcoming 70th birthday of his father, prominent Tucson cardiothoracic surgeon **Dr. Gulshan Sethi**. Dev approached Roni, asking her to follow Dr. Sethi around the hospital and photograph him at work. Roni agreed, and Dev ran interference with his father (who had no idea what the real purpose of Roni's photography was).

Roni spent several days following Dr. Sethi around UAMC as he did his patient rounds and then performed open-heart surgery with his cardiac team. Said Roni of the experience, "What magic it was to be so close to damaged but still-beating hearts in the hands of a master, hearts being repaired and lives being reborn."

For their father's surprise birthday party on December 23, 2011, Dev Sethi and his sister **Sonja Joshi** rented warehouse space at 1 E. Toole Ave. in downtown Tucson. Using several custom-made, ceiling-hung 8' X 12' flying walls built to display her oversized pieces, Roni and her team converted the former produce warehouse into an upscale gallery.

The photos displayed were printed with metallic inks, fused behind ultra-Plexiglas, and mounted without frames in order to "float" away from the wall space. With the aged brick backdrop of the warehouse's interior providing a stark contrast, the photos made a dramatic, contemporary statement.

More than 250 people attended the party for Dr. Sethi, who was *very* surprised—and *very* pleased. Dev and Sonja were overjoyed. "My whole life, I've never actually seen what my father does in the operating room," said Sonja, with tears in her eyes. "Now, through Roni's wonderful images, I'm finally able to see his work as he saves lives"

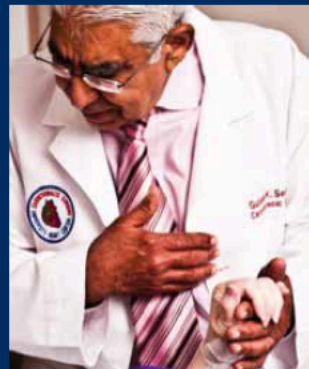
Look for Roni Ziemba's next "Stronger than Steel" exhibit this coming September, again in conjunction with "Celebration of Heroes," with the proceeds once again benefiting the **UAMC Trauma Center**. The show promises to be another ground-breaking collection.



Roni Ziemba in the field—literally.



Dr. Gulshan Sethi performing open-heart surgery (above, left), and on rounds with a patient (below).



Dr. Peter Rhee performing surgery.

Roni Ziemba Photos