



# O&S

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 3 SUMMER 2009

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**Annie Finch**  
**Marc Trujillo**  
**Arlene Ang**  
**Michael Shapcott**  
**Isobel Dixon**  
**Edith Lebeau**  
**Alan King**  
**Jean-Noel Delettre**  
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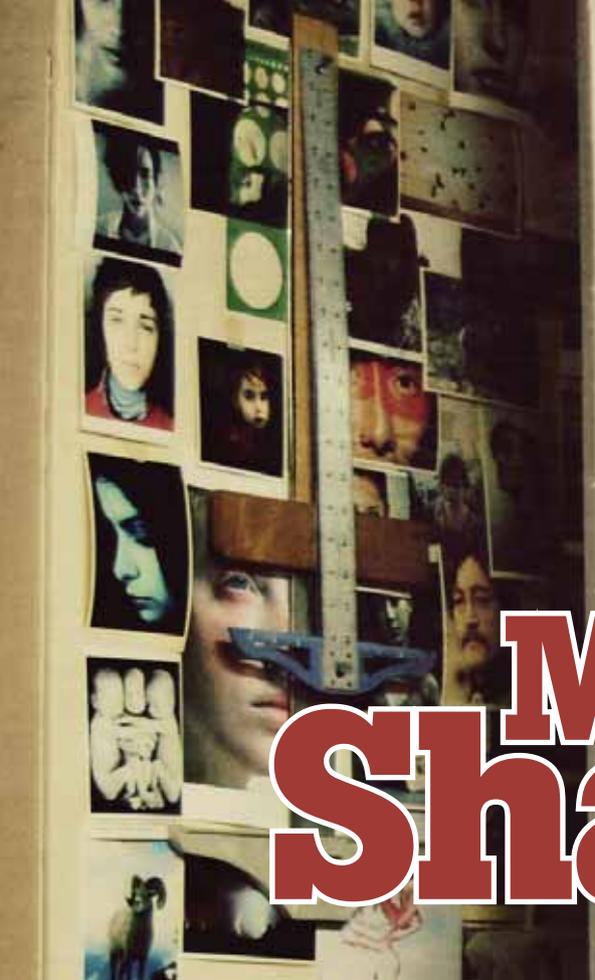
*Short Story Contributor*  
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*“When I create my figures I always hold the intention that they are going through some sort of transformation or positive change. If when the painting is complete, I feel that the character I’ve created is in a heightened state of living or is existing in that in-between time of the new and old, then I have accomplished my intent.”*

# Michael Shapcott

[www.michael-shapcott.com](http://www.michael-shapcott.com)





Photography by Denis Gouin

Studio shot by Melissa Therrien.

**M**ICHAEL SHAPCOTT is an artist from central Connecticut who began drawing at an early age. In high school he realized art would be a life-long passion and attended Paier College of Art in Hamden, Connecticut graduating in 2007. He started to exhibit his work shortly after at group showings and local establishments and has since been successful in showcasing his work all over the country. Viewers and purchasers of Mike's paintings have called them powerful, inspiring, and filled with emotion. Symbols from dream imagery, folklore, and personal memories are the major inspirations and elements used in Mike's work. His art is a unique blend of illustration and traditional portraiture created with a blend of acrylics, graphite and oil. In addition to painting, Mike creates art videos that track the process of painting and show his unique style of working.

## Q&A

### *Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?*

Everyday before I sit down to draw or paint, I guzzle down about two cups of coffee and then proceed with vigorously cleaning and organizing my studio space. I cannot just sit down and begin. I need to build up the courage to do so, and the seemingly simple act of cleaning prepares the physical space around me and, more importantly, my state of mind for the creative process.

### *How do you bring emotion across to a flat surface?*

I always hope a strong range or level of emotion will come through in my work, but it's always a bit of a mystery to me how it is I accomplish that. I could say it has something to do with the details in a subject's face or the layers of paint, but I'm really not sure. I am enchanted, however, by the fact that if I slightly alter the angle of an eye or the color of a cheek, the entire expression of a figure changes, changing the entire feel of a piece. I think the art of bringing emotion to a flat surface will always be a lifelong experiment and learning process for me.

### *How does your environment influence your work?*

Mostly I paint in my own studio. I spend a lot of time there so that environment is very important and has to feel like an extension of me. In addition to having all the supplies I need at my fingertips, I surround myself with photos, images of paintings and other

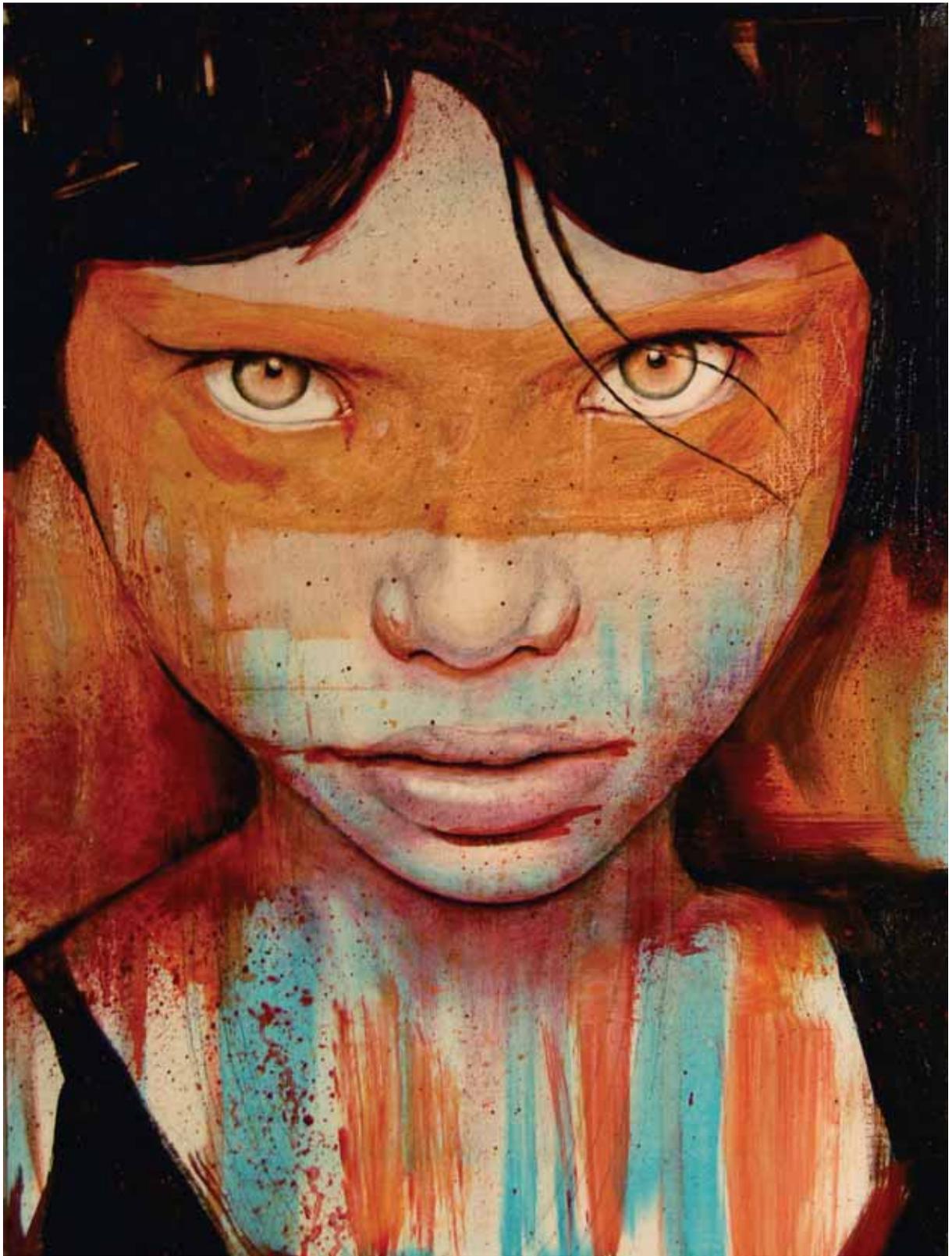
objects that inspire me in some way. I have a string of Christmas lights surrounding the ceiling and walls around my easel because it enhances the warm, meditative state I get into when I am drawing or painting. It is also a necessity that I have music playing at all times during the creative process. Coming back to this familiar environment every time I work, allows me to let go of everything outside of that space and step into myself a bit more.

### *Whose work would you acquire if you were a collector?*

Surrounding my home with inspiring and beautiful pieces of art by becoming an art collector is something I aspire to do. Supposing that funds and resources were unlimited, I would collect work from artists like Ralph Steadman, David Choe, Tamara Muller, and Jenny Saville. I'm definitely interested in collecting work from up-and-coming artists. It is important to me to support other artists and it would be interesting to watch their careers progress.

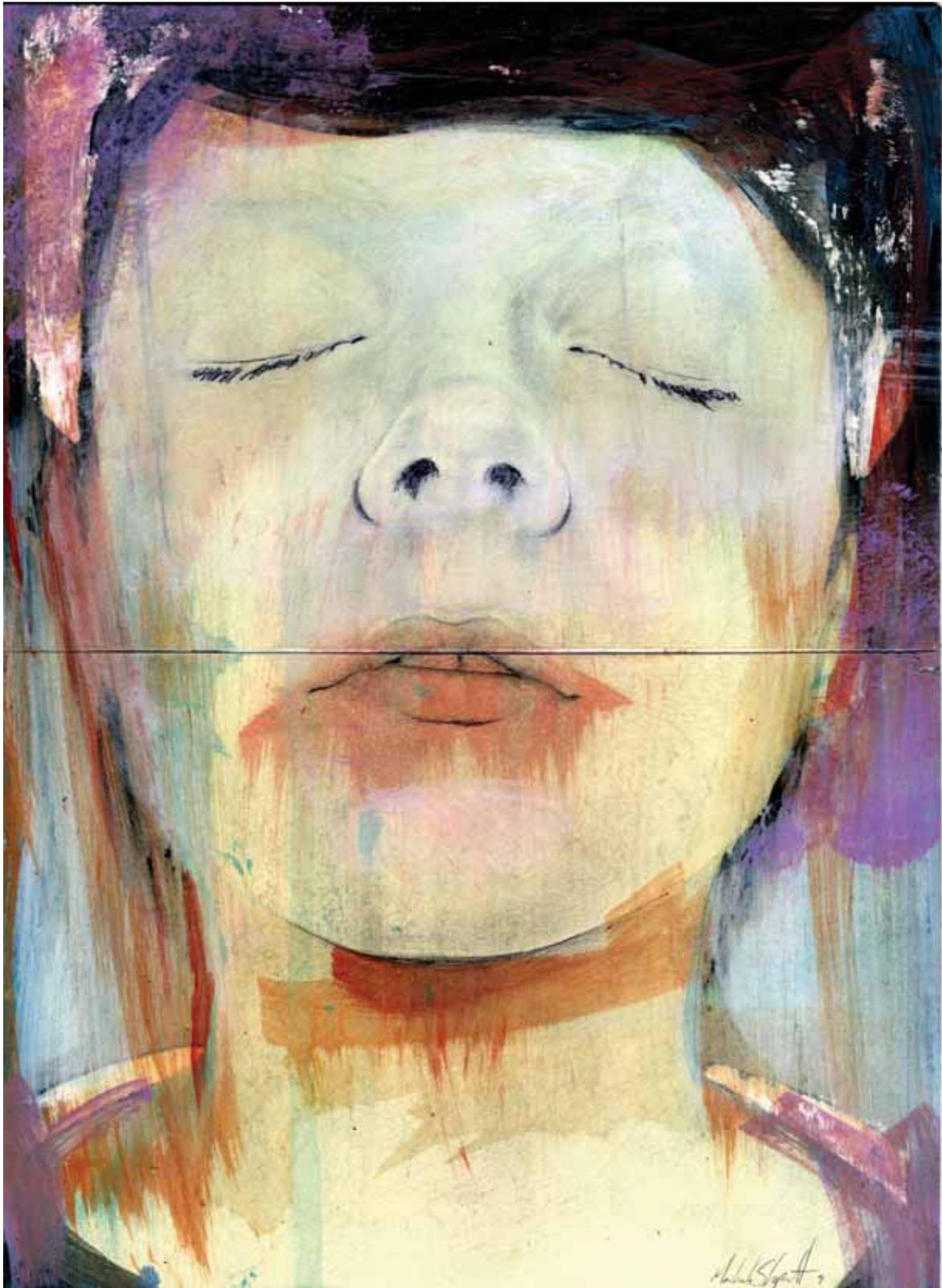
### *Have any of your mistakes become a success?*

I don't usually plan my paintings – I like to let them evolve naturally – so I'm always hoping for what I like to call the "happy accident." When I'm painting with oils I try to be as free as possible and basically smear the paint around. Often times I'll paint over pieces of the painting but most of the marks that I leave are the mistakes. The mistakes usually make the painting.



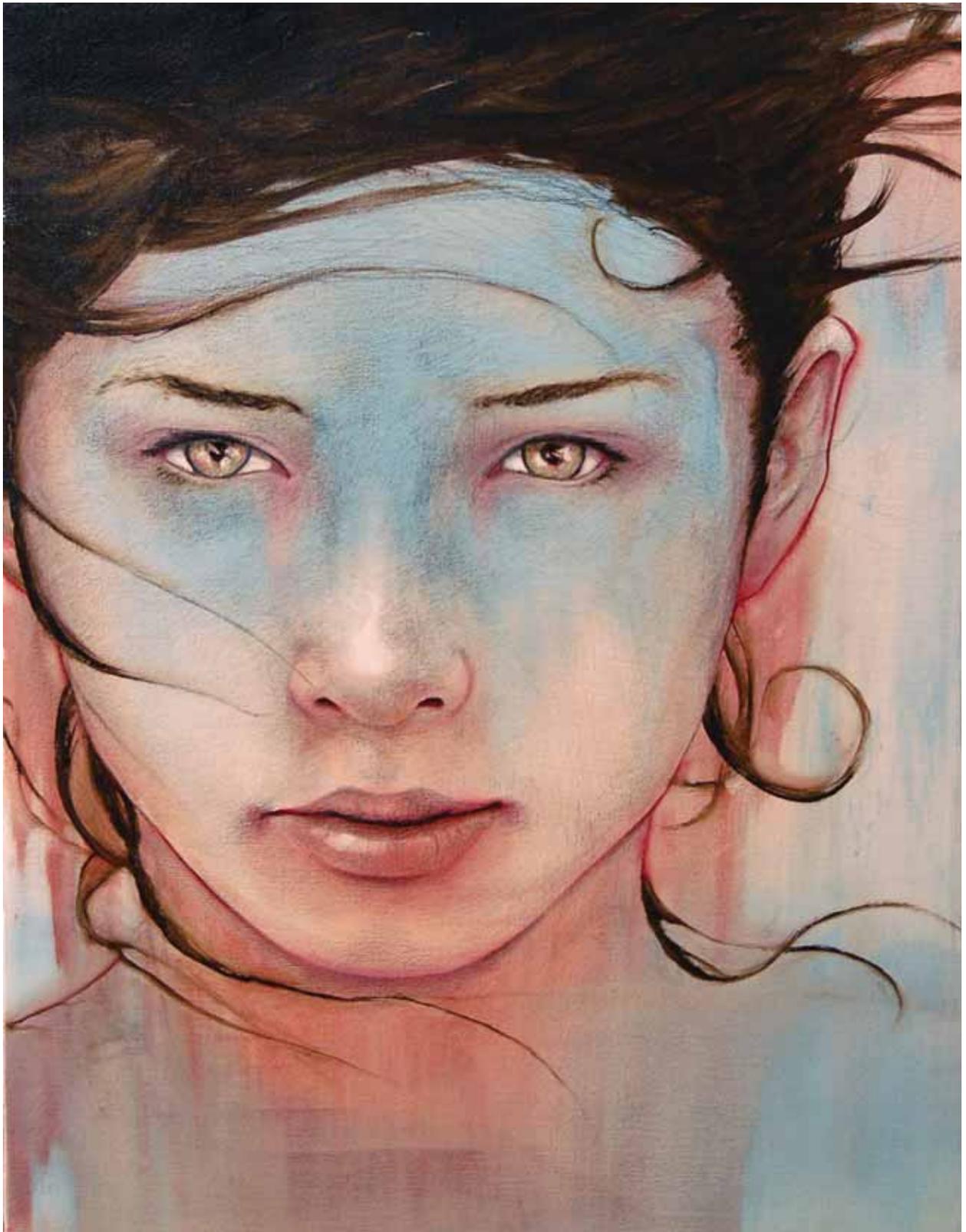
MICHAEL SHAPCOTT

**Pele** graphite/oil on canvas 12" x 16"



MICHAEL SHAPCOTT

Seaweed ink, acrylic on canvas 7" x 9.5"







MICHAEL SHAPCOTT

**Drift** graphite acrylic, oil on canvas 43" x 63"

# Eric Baus's *Tuned Droves*

Review by **Brigitte Byrd**

(Octopus Books, 2008)  
73 pages. \$12.00. Prose Poetry.

In his second full collection of poems *Tuned Droves*, Eric Baus, once more, creates such arresting images that they stay with us long after we have turned the last page of the book. Like the most powerful works of literature, Baus's work is moving, poignant, and indeed haunting. It is in fact impossible to resist the first piece of the collection titled "The Sudden Sun," which sets the tone of the collection:

When a boy's mouth collapses into itself, tiny flames release from his limbs.  
Although this is a small flash, he is startled by the sudden sun. (3)

Although Baus's poetic language is simple and minimalist, he undertakes an elaborate play with words and around words, which come and go, so that the effect is very similar to a variation in music: reiteration with change. Baus is of course an extraordinary wordsmith able to create a mystifying world in front of our eyes just like the boy in the collection who creates paper birds:

A boy gets a bird from cutting paper. Birds become themselves when he  
sees them.

Dear paper birds, I can always see you. A woman, a man, and paper birds.

What are you doing paper birds?

Removing myself from the sky. (8)

*Tuned Droves* reads as a profound reflection on the acquisition of language through a woman, a mother figure, it seems at first, and this acquisition of language materializes in the ability to write, thus through writing it spawns the ability to create this woman:

The way I talk is the result of the way I hear her I was told but it took how  
long to show up in cursive. The small shapes I see when I close my eyes.  
That the waves are getting larger is a sign she is awake. I was born and  
then learned to swim and then I learned how to pronounce the letters of the  
alphabet. I see her through them. (25)

Interestingly, toward the end of the collection, the speaker, presumably the grown boy, precisely informs us that "[he is] not her son" (65). There is definitely a sense of

confusion in the speaker's mind as the narrative (of the collection) pours out : "I do not know what it is I am like. Is it her I am talking to really. I am talking to someone I call by her name" (27).

This disorientation reaches a climax in the fifth section of the collection "A Dismantled Mouth" which suggests that the mouth is to be understood as the vehicle for language yet that language is much more than a discourse reserved to humankind. For instance, after alluding to communication in a plethora of bird species such as peacocks, vultures, hawks, and owls, the speaker focuses on reptilian "language" before ending this section with "the emergence of a wolf" (42). Note that Baus tends to choose rather threatening creatures, at best. Some of these are just sinister.

A sense of alienation ensues in the next section. Baus explores the limitations of the body, or the body as jail, and corollaries: the speaker focuses on the distinct schism between mind and body. Body and mind are interconnected since the mind cannot function without the body as the body cannot exist without the mind, which sends the speaker to "The Continuous Corner":

Had I missed the turning of feet? If I had it had certainly happened suddenly, quickly, during the strong pause my name created. But since the corner was still in the room I decided to walk. My head lowered. My path lowered. The continuous corner remained a sill. (48).

Baus's work is self-reflective, especially toward the end of the collection, as if by providing a script to his images, he wanted to give a clue on his process before delivering one of the key points of his poetics, "This is not another language but two treatments of the same tongue" (62). Viktor Shklovsky's *ostranenie* comes to mind immediately. Baus succeeds in forcing his reader to see common things (and words) in an unfamiliar or strange way to enhance the perception of the familiar, even if he subtly delivers the blue print to *Tuned Doves*:

When the work was finished, there were no chapters.

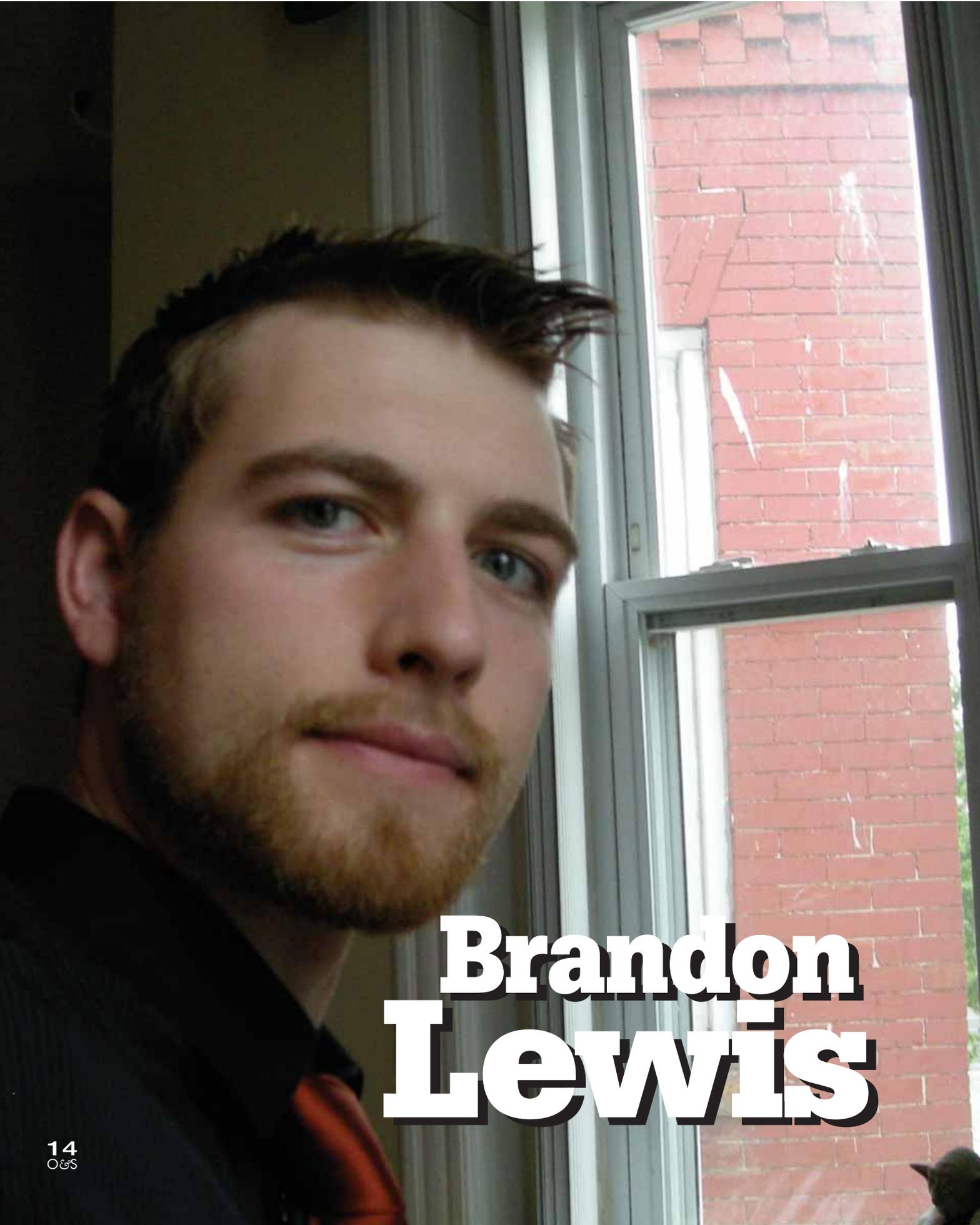
The name of the child was It Is Not There.

It is unlikely it is precise.

To reproduce his mother's voice, hydrogen was added to the body.

For all this activity, the sound was flat. (59)

*Tuned Doves* is a beautiful collection of lyric prose poems which takes us all the way to the edge of Baus's imagination and asks us to follow him in the magical and haunting world he creates. After all, it begins with "A Sudden Sun" to end (or maybe it is the sun itself which ends) in "Orange Water." Who could resist such a magnificent and tragic journey?



# Brandon Lewis

BRANDON LEWIS is a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and is the former Poetry Editor of *Porcupine Literary Magazine*. After receiving his MFA in poetry from George Mason University in 2008, he continues to write poetry, drawing much inspiration from other art forms. His poems and French translations can be found in journals such as *Poet Lore*, *Water~Stone Review*, *Borderlands*, *SNReview*, and *Phoebe*. The poem "Conflagration Empire" is one of three poems that compose "What Will Not Pose for Portrait," a sequence based on Turner paintings that won the Mark Craver Poetry Award in 2008. Brandon Lewis lives in Washington, DC.

# Study, Great Falls

My leg shakes. Have I gone so long without  
sugar today? Oh, it's the tree

to my back, its branches lifting in wind.  
I came to get away and sketch, though I've lost the patience

to reproduce it—pine over the river,  
a crane wading in—the sky over that.

This morning, a near collapse  
of my love life. And tonight? I'll stay

until I get a few details right  
—the bark, her long bangs (in yet another

angled light) overlaying the flood-mark.  
One crane flies east,

one west over the river. And the curve  
of my return? Just a few details.

# Conflagration Empire

After J.M Turner's *The Burning of the House of Lords and Commons*,  
October 16, 1834

*"The blue of the sky reveals to us the basic law of color. Search nothing  
beyond the phenomena, they themselves are the theory."* –Goethe

The counting sticks  
that notch the empire's debts  
kindle – the flames

rise, lick the gray stones and alight over the city a head of ash.  
From the riverboat,

Turner observes  
the violence. He wets his brush  
in the river. What little dark

he paints is not the absence of light, but a physical grit that seals  
distances, buries memories.

The Earth's aggregate color—  
straw blond—and these flames that rise—  
cadmium—belong to the air

more than blue, yet we deal in phenomenon of human perception.  
We are left with color theory. Blue-sky-truth.

311,000 slaves remain  
in the West Indies, and the profits  
will not return the same.

Two white towers, pale as an English girl's arms, reveal themselves  
out of smoke for an instant,

and here is the memorable  
perception—here the instant captured.  
A crowd gathers now

along the banks, their faces lit. The river's current cannot be perceived.  
Likely it is cold, swift, ashen on its way.



PEACOCK

## KRIS CAHILL at Cush Salon

Art Review by **April Carter Grant**

**A**T A RECENT opening in Beverly Hills' sleek Cush Salon, we set aside our insecurities about our Fantastic Sam's haircuts to observe in person around 30 paintings created by Kris Cahill, an artist and clairvoyant based in Los Angeles. It's fitting that the abstract painter is also a seer of auras, since her work is most simply described as colorful and energetic.

While attending the Art Institute of

Chicago, Cahill began her exploration of her signature technique, reverse painting: She paints backward with acrylics on clear vinyl, which, once dried and bonded, is stretched to frames with the color inside. The result is vibrant depth beneath a hard, smooth, very glossy finish that simultaneously looks soft to the touch. (Any artist who has used labor-intensive resin to create a clear shell over their work would surely cry at its lackluster appearance when compared to the clever vinyl technique.)



**FREEFALL**

According to Cahill, one benefit of reverse painting is the inevitable surprise of the finished product: Since it's not always possible to see what's happening when painting backward and overlaying color, even the artist does not know for sure what the piece will look like when the final stroke is made.

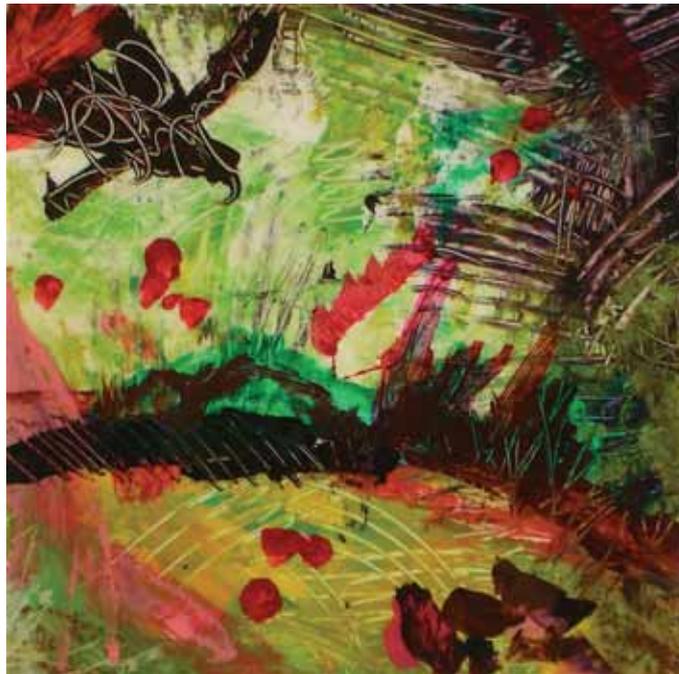
The pieces shown at Cush range from pillowy and daubed (like *Peacock*, 2007) to frenetic with bold strokes (*Freefall*, 2008), so it is easy to understand—or convince yourself that you understand, anyway—the range of emotion the artist experiences while she's



**A SLIGHT CHANGE OF PLANS**

painting. For those less imaginative, the titles of her works, such as *The Beauty of This Moment, It Began as a Quiet Evening*, and *A Slight Change of Plans*, hint at a narrative to nudge you in the right direction. In fact, Cahill's 2009 artist statement cites the importance of her works' titles.

Beside varied brush techniques, Cahill experiments with scraping and combing (*Birds of a Feather*, 2008) and, rarely, incorporating deconstructed geometric shapes (*Four Corners*, 2008). A newer branch of her work features bold hearts on color fields (*Passion*



**BIRDS OF A FEATHER**



**FOUR CORNERS**



**PASSION HEART**

*Heart*, 2009). Some pieces are composed of only a few colors, while others jump wildly across the color spectrum.

When it comes to color, seeing her work online or in print cannot come close to the experiencing the

boldness and feelings apparent when standing before the actual paintings. Printing cannot match the vibrancy of her palette; the web cannot represent its luminosity or depth; and neither can accurately recreate the shine or complexity of a metallic medium, which Cahill sometimes uses.

Some think abstract art is hard to understand and that it breaks all the rules of traditional art, such as composition, space, and texture. Perhaps owing to her background in fine art, Cahill's pieces seem created in deference to these principles. The ability to create solid composition while retaining emotional freedom and "looseness" is a particular value of her paintings, which range in size from eight inches square to nearly three feet square.

Viewers will find themselves drawn to pieces because of their color, style, or overall feeling. This creates a community spirit to her exhibits, as people discuss why they think particular pieces call to them. (It also provides a fun exercise of wondering whether being more attracted to the cuddly or intense works is a sign of one's own demeanor.)

The momentum of Cahill's work is evident in each painting as well as her schedule: Although she's recently decided to refocus on her clairvoyant work, her paintings are currently on display at three other locations: **Women Painters West** in Encino, **Colori Kitchen** in downtown Los Angeles, and the **West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce office**, and available at an Etsy.com shop and each week at the Sunday Brentwood Farmer's Market.

More information about the artist and her work can be found at **KrisCahill.com**.



# Michelle Askin

holds an MFA from West Virginia University. Her poetry has appeared in *Pank*, *The Oyez Review*, *2River View*, *The Sierra Nevada Review*, and elsewhere.

## Stray

At the truck farm: the woman, *how kind!*  
She thinks I've been sleeping with her husband  
(or worse I want to), and still spreads my quilt  
in their back garden shed. This is after the breakdown,  
the owl shaped nurse and her funny, red checks in a box,  
which follow me down the dirt path to a 7 Eleven. Where  
once, I confided in a friend that strange childhood hobby  
of picking up distant radio stations with a FM wide band.  
A furniture store commercial all the way from Raleigh  
was static and thrill in a room where no one else went.  
And then she said she would request me a song  
from whatever town called her name. Seven years,  
I've waited out tornadoes with antennas. Only  
to find the airwaves quiet. This isn't about knowing  
where my friend is, but a matter of being reached—  
a tender hold like that between the couple in the kitchen  
on the morning I have things planned and settled.  
*No I don't think the tomatoes will fit. Though thanks.*  
Out the cab window: their locked bodies saying *relief*.  
Not that I was the storm's first shake or the *come wanting hawk*,  
but just as always before—the *now it's gone. She is over.*

# *Visionware* by Caridad Moro-McCormick

Review by **Melissa McEwen**

Finishing Line Press, 2009.  
29 pages.

*Visionware* is a woman.  
*Visionware* is a bilingual woman.  
*Visionware* is a Cubanita eating

“Harina con huevo frito...at Abuelo’s house...”  
— from “Compulsion: A Chronology”

*Visionware* is an American woman eating

“Steak-um sandwiches with oil-and-vinegar potato chips...”  
— from “Compulsion: A Chronology”

*Visionware* is a woman with meat on her bones.  
*Visionware* is a woman struggling with her weight:

“Imagine a fat girl like me  
shopping for a size 6...”  
— from “The Perfect Dress”

“The pills are small and...yellow,  
the closest thing to magic I’ve ever tried, so I pledge  
allegiance to the doctor who doles them out...  
and...weight falls off my frame five pounds a  
weigh-in...”  
— from “Compulsion: A Chronology”

*Visionware* isn’t

“...la nina bonita  
my parents wanted me to be,  
hands tangled

in suds and Brillo,  
the kind who waited./I counted the minutes  
for lover boy  
to stroke me down.”

— from “Putá”

*Visionware* is an attractive woman:

“...a gang of troubadours singing your praises  
*Damn, baby, you so fine!*  
as we walked in. And you were  
the kind of girl who could get away  
with Brazilian jeans...”

— from “That Night at the Rack ‘Em Room”

*Visionware* is a strong woman:

“You would have thought her a dignitary, the day she walked  
into my 6th grade classroom, staccato heels, her good black dress  
ironed crisp as a dollar...”

— From “Analfabeta”

*Visionware* is a woman in love:

“Her hands found me  
engineers surveying  
a landscape of thighs  
pockmarked thoroughfares  
stretching for miles  
free of girders...”

—from “At That Motel on 8th Street”

“[B]ut once  
you pressed me up  
against the wall  
of that plush, pink  
dressing room, kissed  
me slow and deep...”

— from “The Perfect Dress”

*Visionware* is a heartbroken woman:

“These days  
you’ve quit smoking  
and I’ve quit you  
but I ache  
to call  
and take  
what I can get  
a sliver  
of not enough...  
Better to forget  
that cigarette  
than have to  
wean myself  
off you  
one more time.”

— from “Like Finger Sandwiches for Sumo Wrestlers”

“He is all there.  
Disney promises,  
fairy tales,  
a cameo carved out of soap.../I was  
an indulgence.  
Cashmere draped across your thighs,  
brownie binge after years of salad,  
sweet cling peaches in February.”

— From “For my Lover Returning to her Husband”

*Visionware* is every woman and is the newly released chapbook by Caridad Moro-McCormick. Part of the New Women’s Voices Series, *Visionware* explores all aspects of womanhood — daughterhood, wifehood, and motherhood. In a voice strong and sure, Caridad Moro-McComick’s poems do not flinch. Moro-McComick is not afraid to confront what some might deem unmentionable or topics that others might shy away from. The fearlessness of these poems is what makes *Visionware* an impressive read.

# An' Angelia Thompson

www.angeliasart.com

*"I paint what I'm passionate about. Many times I start with an idea for a painting and it evolves into something else. I don't create art so much as art creates me. I have always been drawn to pure, saturated colors. As a child, I would spend hours arranging and rearranging my crayons in different color combinations. It was like experimenting with musical chords. My passion for life and fascination with color still hold true today. My paintings continue to be triggered by passion, and I'm still obsessed with color juxtaposition. I think that's evident in my work."*

## Q&A

***What is your preferred medium and do you have a secret weapon?***

My medium of choice is acrylic. There are so many wonderfully vibrant colors readily available, and I use a lot of them straight from the tube. There are also scads of fun additives to experiment with, and I will be going back to using some of those in future paintings. I used oils for awhile but found I didn't have the patience for the required drying time. I made quite a few "muddy mistakes" and I was never able to blend them to my satisfaction. I like to layer my colors in thin glazes. Acrylics are perfect for that, and that's part of my secret weapon for getting my colors to vibrate off of each other. I also like to use complimentary colors next to each other. That also adds to the luminous effect.

***What do you do when you are not creating art?***

There seems to be too much of that lately! I've been busy on the Internet refurbishing my website, [www.angeliasart.com](http://www.angeliasart.com), joining social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, MiPo, W.A.R.M. and Artists to Artists. I'm also an active member of Ovation TV Community and Fine Art America, and I just started a blog (<http://angeliasart-angelia.blogspot.com>). These activities are fun and helpful, but I'm hoping that as I get accustomed to them, I won't be online quite so much! When I do manage to pull myself away from the computer, I love flower

gardening and spend lots of time planting, weeding and admiring my flowers and the creatures who come to visit. I also like reading and most of the books I read are of a spiritual nature or art related. My husband and I love to go for rides in the car and often journey to the country admiring the beautiful landscapes that are nearby. Sometimes we'll travel almost to Pennsylvania which is about an hour away. I also love to play my guitar. I don't generally play for anyone but myself - it's strictly for my own amusement, and it takes so little to amuse me.

***How has your environment influenced your work?***

I live in northeast Ohio's snowbelt region. For almost 6 full months out of the year, the weather is cold and gray and there's some sort of precipitation falling from the sky! Every sign of color is wiped clean from the landscape until all that's left are shades of gray and umber. It's dark by 5:00 pm. Unless one is an avid fan of snow sports, there's not much to see or do out of doors. The summer and autumn social networks start breaking down and everyone huddles in their respective homes in the fetal position until spring's first rays of sun begin to appear. That leaves a lot of time for creative juices to flow and time to reflect on happy memories of spring and summer. Aside from the birth of my sons, I think my happiest memories have their roots in spring and summer. Even my earliest memories are found



An'Angelia Thompson was born and raised in northern Ohio, and continues to reside in the greater Cleveland area with her husband, Keith, and sons, Nicholas and Michael. She displayed artistic talent from an early age and spent childhood summers participating in local art programs. She developed a strong appreciation for artists from every genre, and was heavily influenced by the pure, rich colors of the 60's. Those influences remain evident in her work today.

**Like the artist herself, there is nothing timid about her work.**

Her "smack you in the face" commentaries are infused with humor and tenderness, metaphor and symbolism. When her softer side shows through in her more impressionistic style, her use of more quiet tones still draw the viewer in as they radiate around the canvas and breath a life of their own.

in the numerous flower gardens that surrounded me as a child, and I recall the time I spent studying the effects of the early afternoon sun on the gigantic maple tree in our front yard.

When I turned 10 years old, our family moved from our small apartment in the city to a new house out in the country. It was rough moving away from all my friends in the city and I spent a lot of time by myself. During that same year, it was evident that I was having difficulty seeing the chalkboard at school, and it was discovered that I had become quite near-sighted. I will never forget looking through that first pair of glasses. It was like I had never seen the world before! Everything was crisp and clear almost to the point of being surreal. I had not realized how gray my world had become without the glasses, and I think in some respects, my bold, pure color palette is a direct reflection of hanging on to that experience of seeing color all over again and attempting to live with those rich hues all year long.

***Which artist had the greatest impact on you?***

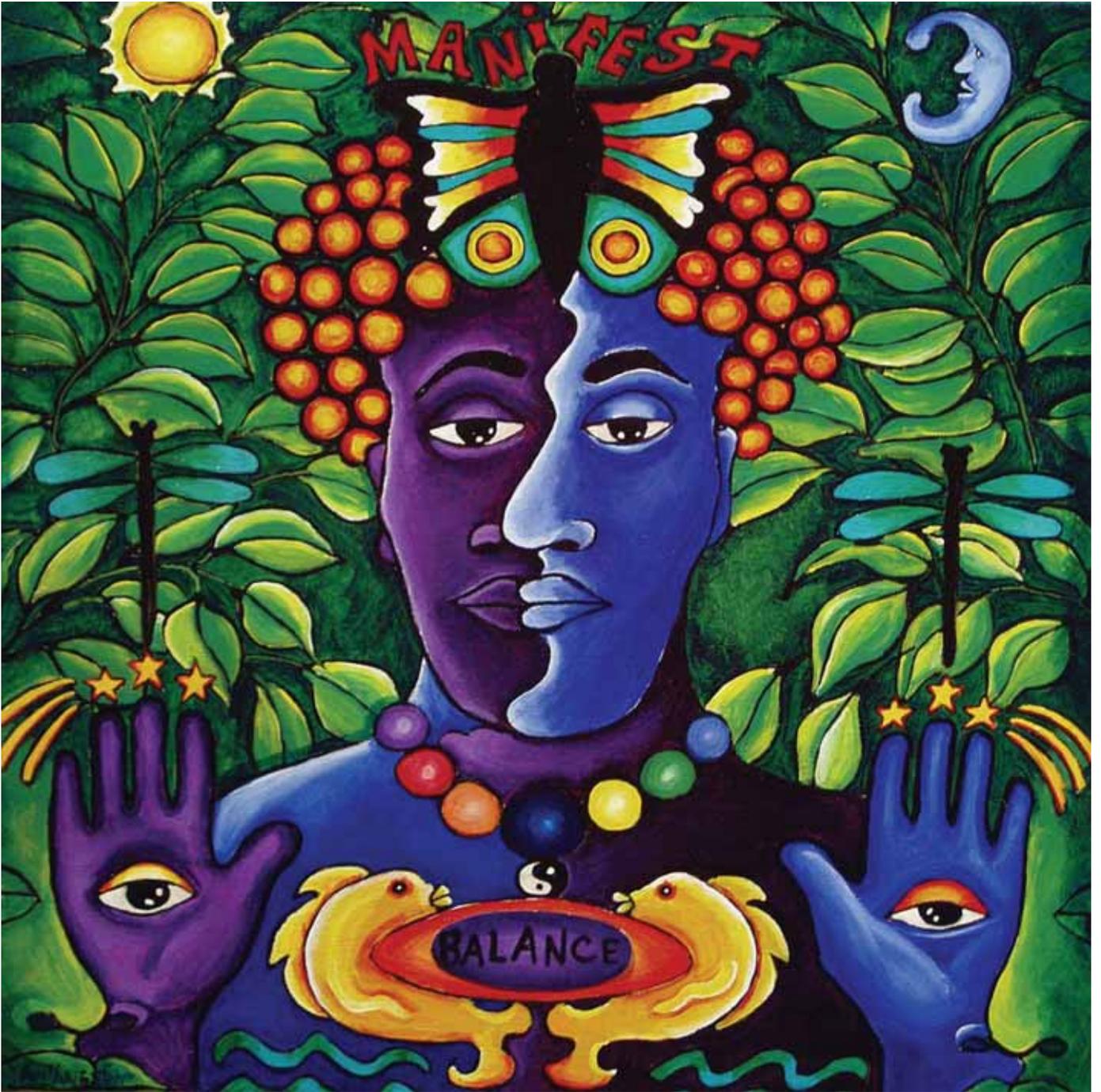
As most other artists would probably say, the great masters have all had an impact on me in some way. The artists I admired early on were Picasso and VanGogh, Matisse, Renoir and Monet. I was also heavily influenced by popular artists of the 60s such as Warhol and Peter Max, but the artist that had the greatest impact on me is someone I can't name. It's the artist who drew the sketches for the art school advertisements in the early 60s. There was probably more than one artist responsible

for those sketches seducing the public into possible wealth and fame as an artist. It's a blurry memory, but as I recall, the ad stated that perspective artists should duplicate the picture freehand, making the image larger or smaller to eliminate the possibility that it had been traced. The drawing was then to be sent to the art school where a professional panel would determine if there was enough talent evident for admission to their school and a lucrative career as an artist. So, one summer afternoon when I was around 6 or 7, I drew a replica of the long lashed fawn in the advertisement about twice the size of the original. My mother saw it after I had finished, and I could hear the amazement in her voice as she excitedly asked me if I had drawn it myself. Her pride and approval of my ability were palatable. I remember her excitement as she showed my drawing to the mothers who lived on either side of us. My mother's declaration that that I was an artist was all I needed for validation of what I already knew - my passion to create would be my lifelong mission and God's purpose for me. I was indeed, an artist.

***What is your next project?***

I'm currently working on a series of paintings for a Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) Show coming up this fall, and I'm also working on a series of abstract paintings. I haven't done any abstracts in a few years and I'm feeling the need to be a bit more expressive in my work. I'm playing with some different color combinations for both series. I think it keeps my work fresh and exciting and is a reflection of where I am right now.





AN'ANGELIA THOMPSON

Manifest acrylic on canvas 24" x 24"





AN'ANGELIA THOMPSON

Crushed acrylic on canvas 20" x 20"



Photo by book.co.za

# Isobel Dixon

grew up in South Africa, where her prize-winning debut *Weather Eye* was published. She now lives in Cambridge, England and works in publishing.

Her poems have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *London Magazine*, *The Manhattan Review*, *The Warwick Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Dreamcatcher* and *Wasafiri*, among others. She has been commissioned to write poems for the British Film Institute, and her work is included in several anthologies, including *The Forward Book of Poetry 2009*, and the pamphlets *Unfold* and *Ask for It by Name*.

Her latest collection *A Fold in the Map* is published by Salt.

[www.isobeldixon.com](http://www.isobeldixon.com)

# First Faints

That cavalier slam and my hand too slow,  
blood crescent on the white moon of my nail.  
It was seeing my finger scythe right off  
that had me falling in the passageway, relief.

And I spiralled from the science lab's tall stool,  
an experiment too far, one humid noon.  
The Periodic Table of the Elements  
loomed behind the helping boys and I was shy

to be such a girl and so impractical,  
disorderly. A hot exam had me  
ragdolloed by the desk, teachers calling out  
for tea, splashing water on my wrists,

my face. But it's years now and I've mostly kept  
my head. Know the vital signs. Have a sweet  
to suck, sugar's saving silt against  
that soothing tide, the sussuration

in my ears, surrender and surcease. Head  
between my knees, I resist the quitting  
of this peevish self: just one smooth unfurling  
to a deeper place, smudging of the cells,

the demise of history. But this comes close,  
love, fluming down the tunnel of release.

# A Mess of Vinegar

Just yesterday, it seemed a fine repast,  
this dish of prawns. And now, all's gall,  
the bitter mingle-mangle of the heart.

I please not you. This truth has long escaped  
my doting eye. Blind hope, making  
of breath, a kiss, her capstone.

I'm nothing but a fool, a bawd.  
Mistress Quickly cannot come too soon  
to bring such physick as the tavern can afford.

# Michael Estabrook

## She only smiled

“He had the hots for me,” she states so nonchalantly, and I cringe. Even though it was 40 years ago I still cringe whenever I hear of her old boy friends or my potential rivals.

“What? Did you really just say, ‘He had the hots for me?’” She was telling me about a guy who would come over to her table in the cafeteria, apparently attracted by her long straight silky dark brown hair.

“Well yes, he did, but it was in the beginning of my senior year, and I don’t even know his name, and nothing ever happened. It lasted less than a month, a week,” she flicks her fingers in the air. “He went away as soon as we got engaged.”

“Oh, that’s nice to know. You couldn’t have dated him even if you wanted to because we were engaged, right?”

“Yes silly, that’s right, he saw my ring and went away, just like that.”

And I’m thinking about all the times I could have lost her, all the close calls I had. “I should have asked you to marry me long before I did, don’t you think?” She smiled at me then, she only smiled.



**“As a poet, you are only as good as your next poem and like a surfer searching for that perfect wave, I am searching for that next perfect poem. What keeps me going, what keeps me moving forward as a poet is my wife. After 37 years of marriage she is still not only the most beautiful woman I have ever known, but the most beautiful person I have ever known. If I find that perfect poem anywhere I’ll find it in her.”**

# ***Tax-Dollar Super-Sonnet (2008-1953)***

**by Nicole Mauro**

Review by **Grady Harp**

Chapbooks are not only becoming a popular means for placing new works before the public in a time when publishing houses are tightening the belt that surrounds us all, but the format of Chapbooks is becoming an art form in itself. Witness the current work of Nicole Mauro, *TAX-DOLLAR SUPER-SONNET*. This biting clever collection of verse is described by the author as ‘a limited edition chap written by me and nine of the most recent US Presidents, and designed, published and distributed by Dawn Pendergast and her micro-press for the *Dusie Chapbook Kollektiv, year 3.*’

The presentation is a red and white striped cloth cover, hand sewn with thread stars/asterisks that when opened reveals an inner cover of a solid blue field again decorated with the stars/asterisks: the theme of political mumbo jumbo is clearly set!

Across the following pages, set in standard type but sprinkled with typewriter ‘x’ s are selected words and phrases by the last nine Presidents, beginning with poem ‘43’ – Washington, that usurps key words and phrases and bumbles and truths uttered by the 43rd President George W. Bush. From these actual excerpts Mauro has fashioned a narrative of sorts, painting a portrait of a man and time not likely to be forgotten:

‘Ordinary

Iraqis

May God bless you all x we are x foment x most x very  
and so x Oceans and friendly

Neighbors x that x story x that x freedom

The story of x even x was x we learned x more

Even

Than x before.....

Mauro proceeds in like manner to explore the words of Clinton, the elder Bush, Reagan, Carter, Ford, Nixon, Johnson, Kennedy, and Eisenhower, arranging them in excerpts from varying parts of the country (Washington, Orlando, Baltimore, Houston). Each ‘poem’ may first appear as a word salad, but with Mauro’s sensitive placement of spoken words she manages to paint portraits of men and periods of time that on reading again (and again) become indelible reminders of where we have been.

Is this poetry or is this a design element posing as poetry? At first glance this collection of nine works would appear as a gimmick for attention, adorned as it is with such a patriotic cover. But careful study of each of these pages reveals not only a keen eye and ear for truth, but a philosophical bent that is as subtle as it is poignant. And that is a test of fine poetry – make a mark, turn around, re-examine, and find a lasting impression. *TAX-DOLLAR SUPER-SONNET* is a treat for the eye and the mind.



# David Campos

delivers drugs for a pharmacy and is a student at CSU Fresno. He performs spoken word poetry at slams and open mics. He is also a co-host of *Pákatelas*, a literary program, on KFCF 88.1 FM Fresno. He really loves tortas.

# My First Chipped tooth

During lunch in fourth grade,  
Ma, a scrawny hmong kid  
slung words like dirt at my face  
clods of it, with rocks inside  
scratching away at my skin,  
tearing through, I bled pride,

the small amount of machismo  
my father had implanted in me,  
telling me not to walk away from a fight,  
to stand there and chop away.  
Stand there and bleed and feel life  
like he did as a kid  
wet with anger, the word bastard

stinging his eardrums, a constant buzzing noise  
his classmates wouldn't give up.  
And he swung his fist instead of words.  
He shows me his tooth, the one that's chipped,  
says this is not walking away.  
I wanted that toughness.

I wanted my own chipped tooth  
that told stories  
that reminded me every day that I felt life too.  
So I told Ma, in the bathroom, during lunch recess  
and the table went silent.

The steak fajitas tasted better than before  
the milk was sweeter.  
The attention was on me,  
the unpopular chubby kid who made funny faces  
and wore second hand clothes.

The bathroom was small, amazing how many kids came to watch.  
there were even two girls there.  
I made them all laugh pretending to be karate kid  
as Ma stepped in and came at me.  
His fist hit my face

and I coward, turning my back.  
I felt kicks on my legs and spine.  
I covered my head and fell  
against the tile floor. I wept.  
I heard some other kids say “run”  
and another called me a “pussy”

and suddenly the whole schoolyard knew  
about my own chipped tooth.

# Going Hunting

1.

We wore two layers of socks up to our knees,  
our legs like a layered cake of cottons,  
white as the snow they protect from.

We put on one boot at a time.  
The foot glides into this cave.  
Dark. Tight. A microwave for our feet..

2.

The thermos sends the steam  
into the sky as prayers. The home  
brewed coffee pours

into small Styrofoam cups.  
The huddle of men shiver,  
sip, whisper battle plans

onto the skin  
of the Earth. Small rocks  
become mountains, breaking

sand lines become rivers.  
Then the thermos closes. Prayers  
stop. We scatter.

3.

Dawn lands onto the tips  
of earth's attempt at Babel.

They're covered with frozen  
sugar to quench summer's

thirst. We begin our accent  
towards the light. The skin

beneath our feet crackles.  
Pebbles and sand rub

Against each other. The sounds,  
Subtle against the breeze, cold,

piercing, unable to forgive.  
As the hunters climb,

to the heavens.



**Craig Awmiller was born in Seattle and will be moving to Los Angeles in the near future. He has been employed as a piano mover, as an accordion player, and as an advocate for people with disabilities. He writes because he is nervous.**

# Craig Awmiller

## A Magistrate in Sodom

The town was sinful.  
I was sinful too.  
My books taught me to stare and  
I winked instead.  
She was the daughter of a friend.  
She stole a handful of almonds.  
I pretended she was crippled in her head  
and that she did not know what was hers and what was not.  
I saw her again years later.  
Riding a donkey, laughing,  
she had forgotten all about her childish crime, I think.  
One man's dog bit another man's goat  
because some milk soured.  
Lenders accused. Debtors ran.  
I saw these things and did not say anything,  
certain that such circumspection was in keeping  
with a warning: you are not an unjust god.

# Erin Bealmear

Erin Bealmear's poetry has been published in *Nerve Cowboy*, *Opium*, *The Cortland Review*, *In Posse Review*, *CrossConnect*, *The Rambler*, *Main Street Rag*, and *Identity Theory*, among others. She was also a finalist in the New Issues Poetry Prize and the *Mudfish Poetry Prize*. Once, when she told a baseball player that she adored him, he told her to stop being so immature.

[www.takeoffyourveil.com](http://www.takeoffyourveil.com)



# Do It Now

If you want to dance  
the cosmic tango  
with me  
then you better make a move  
soon  
because I could walk  
out the door  
and be hit  
in the head  
by a falling anvil  
or accidentally run into  
an out-of-control machete  
and you'll think, damn,  
I really should have fucked her  
when I had the chance.

# Corrupted by Baseball

Maybe I went to your softball game  
and maybe I witnessed your heavily-veined forearms  
swing that wooden bat  
and maybe I saw it connect with the ball  
and maybe it went really far  
and maybe I cheered, bopping up and down  
like a molecule  
under a microscope  
and maybe I wanted to run down to the field  
remove my navy blue dress, and chest bump you  
on the dirt-covered home plate,  
in front of everyone,  
maybe I did,  
but that doesn't mean I like you.



# Richard Frost

*"I've always been intrigued by faces that tell a story, or seem to reveal eccentricities or hidden truths, revealed to us only by moments of unconscious abandonment."*

[www.myspace.com/richardsart](http://www.myspace.com/richardsart)

**R**ICHARD J. FROST born and raised in Brooklyn , New York was influenced in large by the real if not surreal-life images of Coney Island which shaped his perceptions and fascination with people. Relocating to Florida with the family in the mid '60's' Frost's cartooning talents were immediately apparent as far back as elementary school when his 6th grade teacher singled him out for his face sketching technique in cartooning family members and was so impressed by his artistic gift that she contacted the local papers who published stories about Frost entitled "Siblings Good For Laughs" in the Fort Lauderdale News and "Up and Coming Artist" in The Hollywood Sun Tattler. His aspirations to pursue that gift finally congealed after migrating to Los Angeles in the '70's, eventually enrolling at Otis Parsons where he discovered that his true artistic strength was not in landscapes or seascapes but what he calls "facescapes" from caricatures and cartoons to detailed portraitures ...The onetime art director at Merv Griffin Productions, Frost's biting and satiric images were most recently shown at the Risk Press gallery in West Hollywood in a one man show entitled "Disruptive Facescapes". He is currently being featured at BEINART INTERNATIONAL SURREAL ART COLLECTIVE <http://beinart.org/artists/richard-frost/gallery/paintings/>

## Q&A

*Richard, your characters take on a personality of their own. How do you bring emotion across to a flat surface?*

I really don't know the answer to that ... It usually takes me several days of painting to find what it is I am looking for in a face ... the painting starts telling me what to do, I have to get out of my own way and let it happen on its own. I find if I think too much I lose the painting...

*How do you feel about formal training?*

I think that formal training can be very good in the sense that it is the one time in your life when you get to be around other artists and you get to see the process and get to use their eyes and share your thoughts ... and the more talent you're around, it helps you up your game ... Besides a good art school does not teach you how to paint, they help you teach yourself.

*Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?*

I just start painting right on the canvas ... loosely drawing in my lines with acrylic paint ... I like acrylics because they dry fast and I can lay out my initial composition ... the more paint I get on the canvas the easier it is to move. I do step away from the canvas quite often,

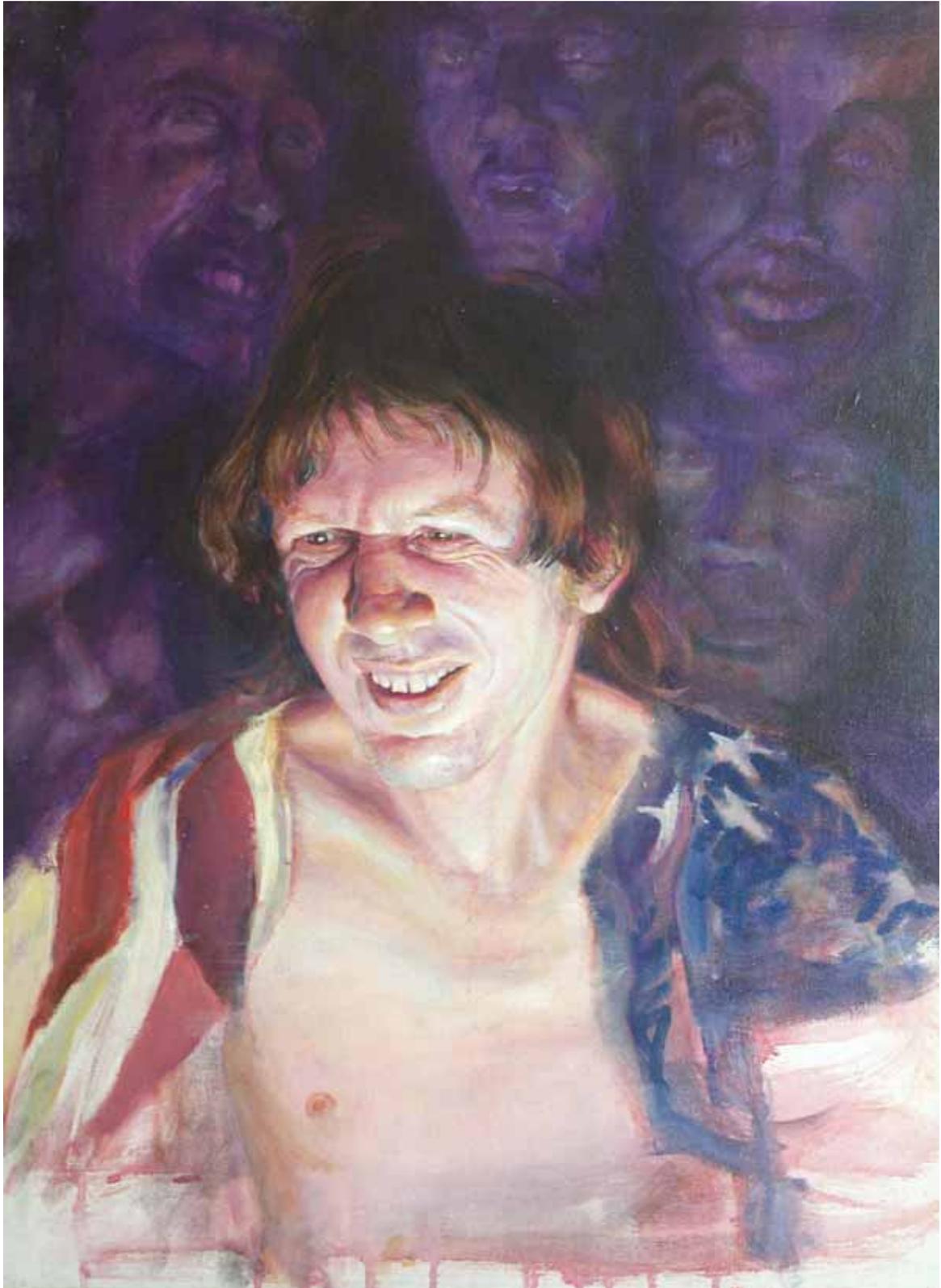
going away and coming back gives me a fresh viewpoint. I am constantly making changes ... A lot of artists paint in the eyes of a portrait last, they consider it the final touch ... I like to paint in the eyes early in the painting, because it helps the painting take on a life of its own.

*Have any of your mistakes become a success?*

Because of my very loose approach to painting ... much of what I do would probably be considered mistakes. I am not into correct proportions. I like my natural style to show through, it gives my painting that tweak ... I sometimes will force a composition on a canvas leaving the perspective out of whack, you can see the example of this in my painting of "THE COFFEE SHOP".

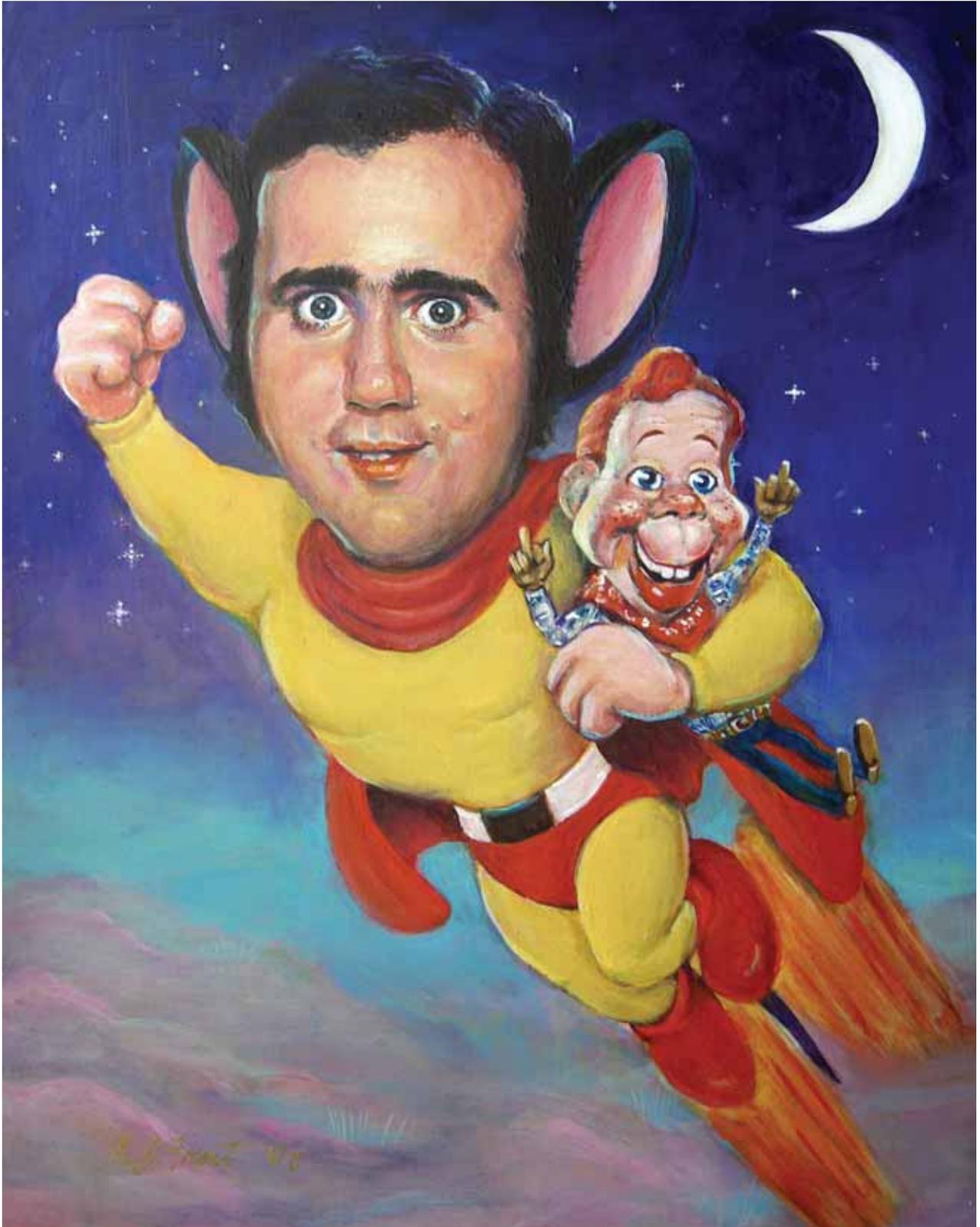
*Who is your favorite subject and why?*

My favorite subject has been members of my family ... My brother Glenn is in a few of my paintings. One Of them is called "Voices" the painting with the flag around his shoulders ... My niece is in the painting "Daddy's Little Angel" the girl and doll painting. I love my family, but they are a bit looney ... I know they're damaged ... I always love the damage to show through ... we are all a bit damaged aren't we?



**RICHARD FROST**

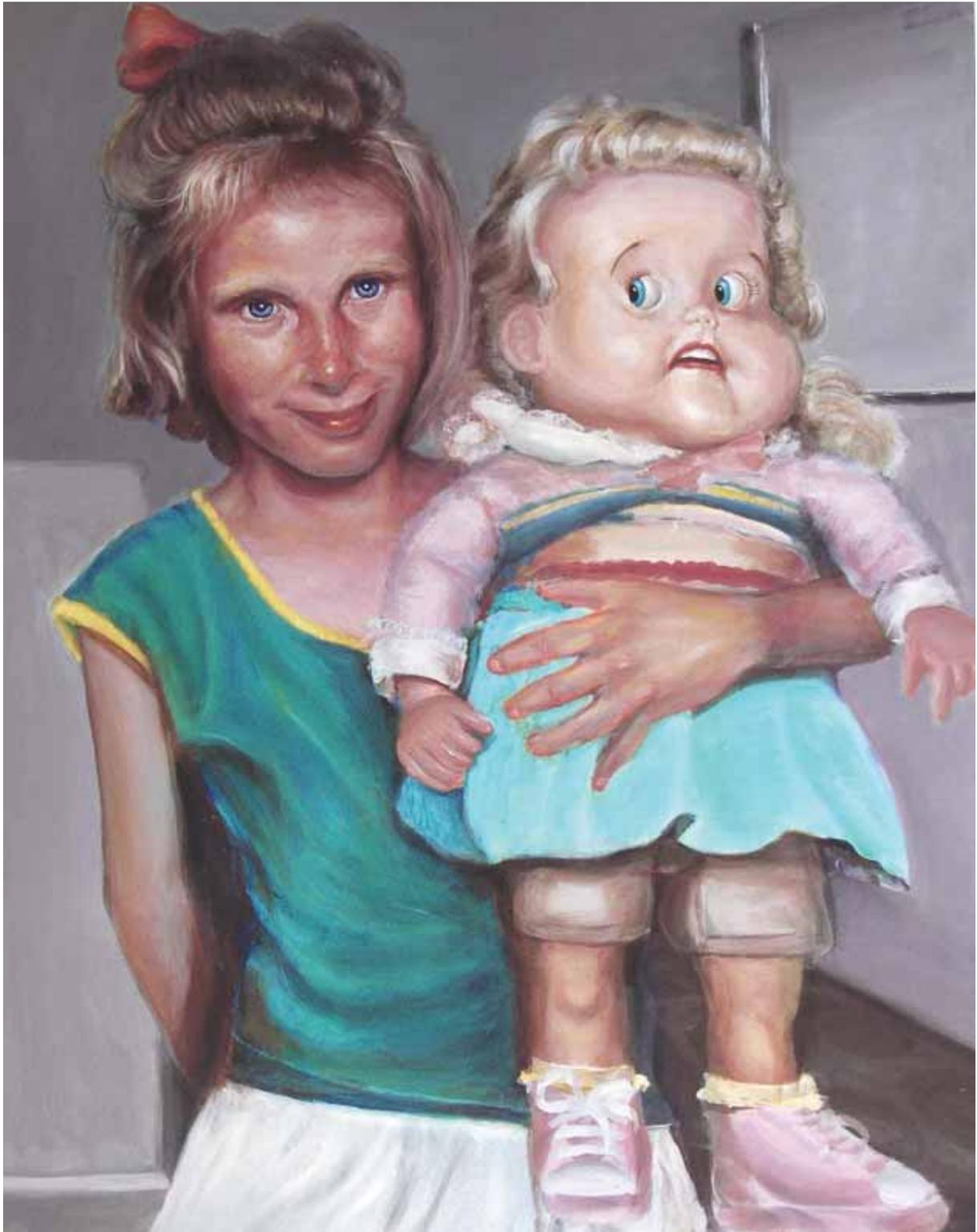
**Voices** acrylic on canvas 22" x 30"



RICHARD FROST

Andy Kaufman acrylic on masonite 11" x 14"





**RICHARD FROST**

**Daddy's Little Angel** acrylic on masonite 24" x 30"

# Alan King

## Proposition

Fred picks at his batter-fried onions, shakes his head:  
*She said it would never work*

*with me; that I know too many women.* An ex told you the same thing before demanding you either cut your play sisters loose or lose her

for good. And why does it always come down to the final proposition, as if life had a limit on possibilities?

And what happens when neither party stops fighting the forces of arbitration? Maybe you end up dateless on a Saturday night, sharing appetizers with your boys

in a log cabin-style restaurant – considering the symbolism of a talking moose head on the wall.

## Affairs

Every night, I'm met by a woman with skin the color of sun-glazed honey, her dark and thick lips open

like a sliced plum; thighs long and curved as melons. She pops up at 3 a.m. in a web ad and asks:

*Need a girlfriend?* as if all it took was an answer to get close enough for my tongue to snowboard down

the slope of her neck, or for lonely hands to cup her breasts like passion fruit. And couldn't our lives be a little kinder,

our interactions with one another less complicated, if we were upfront about what we wanted?

Her question as casual as a waitress asking, *Need any dessert with that, or more sugar for your coffee?*

**Alan King has received fellowships from VONA (Voices of Our Nation) and Cave Canem. When the suburban Maryland resident isn't sending off poems to numerous journals and anthologies, he's chasing the muse through Washington, D.C. – people-watching, documenting and laughing at the strange things some people will say to get close to one another. Alan's currently shopping around his manuscript, *The Music We Are*. He's the author of a chapbook with a similar title and another chapbook, *Transfer*.**

# Out of Season

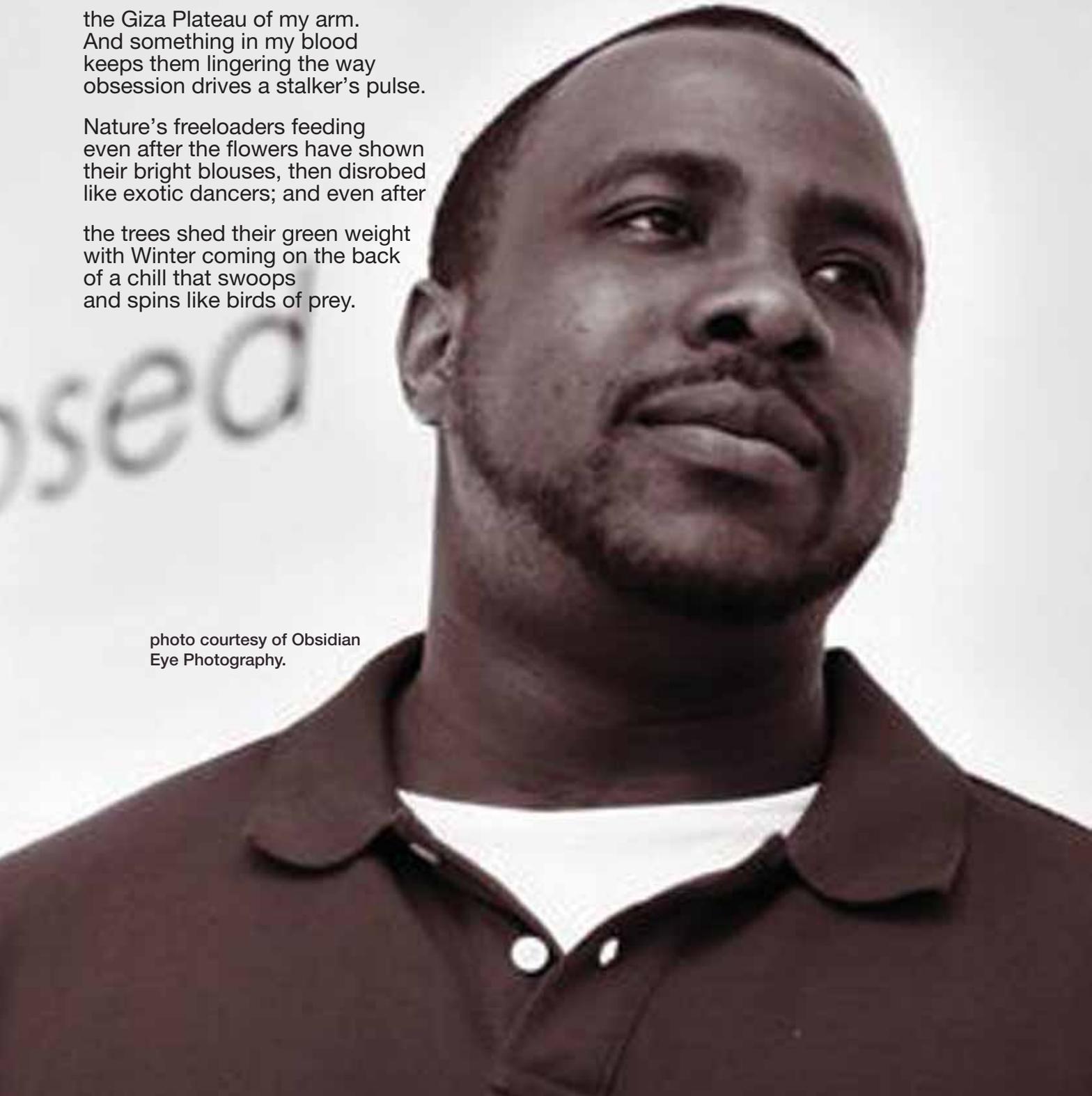
Mosquitoes stick my skin  
with a thirst larger than  
their slim straws, leaving  
tiny pyramids swelling along

the Giza Plateau of my arm.  
And something in my blood  
keeps them lingering the way  
obsession drives a stalker's pulse.

Nature's freeloaders feeding  
even after the flowers have shown  
their bright blouses, then disrobed  
like exotic dancers; and even after

the trees shed their green weight  
with Winter coming on the back  
of a chill that swoops  
and spins like birds of prey.

photo courtesy of Obsidian  
Eye Photography.



# Oddity

As if each set of arms  
were grown for a talent  
I neglected, or for each time

I've turned down gigs  
at churches. And don't God  
always take a humbling

hand to those who shun  
him publicly? The morning  
I woke like this, I wondered

if I'd gotten myself into a whale  
of a situation, like Jonah.  
Now my change cup sits out

like a spare palm, like that  
of the blind man outside  
the gates of a temple

called "Beautiful" — only  
instead of ignoring me,  
people gather to watch

what must be a circus act —  
no bearded ladies or fire eaters,  
though; just me outside

a metro station, playing  
for mere coins — one set  
of hands holding an acoustic

guitar, another angling a flute  
to pursed lips, and the other  
rapidly smacking congas.

# A Question of Brotherhood

A loud pop, and my body  
tenses at what it mistakes  
for a gunshot, or a child  
smashing an air-filled bag

between his hands. But  
it's two black guys across  
the street, slapping palms  
before pulling each other

into an embrace. And so much  
of my youth was spent with  
friends navigating our way through  
the wilderness of manhood —

crushing empty beer cans  
against our skulls and showing  
our scars, proof we were  
unsuspecting victims

of childhood curiosities.  
But I don't know what to call  
this moment — two linebacker-  
sized men in a public display

of affection, neither one  
worried about how others will  
perceive them hugging  
longer than usual.

# Etiquette

*AWP NYC 2008*

As if possessed by rabid demons,  
you watch them kick and punch  
the air, awkward as toddlers –

a martial arts class for beginners?  
No. Writers dancing on the last

night of the conference – shaking  
the ghost of professional etiquette  
before returning to their lives

as book award recipients and professors  
at prestigious writing programs.

Could the strained expressions mean  
poets struggling to break James Brown  
down to iambics, while the fiction

folks are more interested with  
the narrative plot of ‘Funky President,’

or lack there of? And as a kid,  
you grew up denying your superheroes’  
weaknesses. But what do you take away from

the sight of those idolized, and once known  
as just names on book spines lining

your shelf – literary heavyweights reduced  
to a gang of babbling drifters, or kung fu stunt  
artists fighting off imaginary muggers?

# Cosmic Girl

even now, knowing  
what you know,  
you still can’t shake her  
from your head

almost six years since  
you’ve seen her curvy  
imprint under a sundress

when the breeze was a friend  
lifting her hem and showing her  
flexed calves ablaze in sunlight

you ignored your friends’  
warnings, even after the third  
time she’d introduced herself  
by another name

now, she was Aurora Borealis –  
a band of renegade stars  
streaking the dark sky

and what a way to sum up  
this woman of light with fiery hair  
and a glass-blown body

a woman who, despite your  
pleading, quit you cold turkey  
and left you whimpering  
in the arms of friends,

recalling the obvious signs  
of trouble, like her pointing  
heavenward when asked  
about her hometown

and the fact her previous name  
was a number reserved for God

# The Meek

*...the angels fall from heaven  
...the day the earth stands still*

Groove”

-The System, “Don’t Disturb This

like that night, skating around  
a darkened rink with several  
other silhouettes and Tanya  
gripping my nervous hand

her skin glowing from  
the purple “Couples” sign  
and popping Bubblicious  
behind her thick pink lips  
was all I knew of beauty

and would probably be  
the only time this chunky  
12 year old would get  
so close to divinity

to think this moment  
seemed impossible,  
or would be the closest  
thing to knowing a man’s  
frustration for obsessing  
the unattainable

but Tonya locking her  
fingers with mine and smiling,  
I’m convinced God grants  
the meek a small taste  
of their inheritance

like your cool older  
cousins along the rail,  
watching – grinning  
and nodding: *Yeah*  
*I see you, playa*

# The Written Word as Visual Art

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***herso***

**by Susana Gardner**

Review by **Grady Harp**

Susana Gardner has created a poetic work in *herso* that steps beyond being fine poetry and successfully becomes something entirely different. The presentation of this work feels as important as the poetry within: a matte black folder, secured with a maroon grosgrain ribbon is subtly titled on the back of the folder above a wax stamp imprint of the Dusie Press that produced the work. Opening the folder creates the feeling of entering a private quasi-locked world: perhaps we as readers are invading personal property not meant for our eyes. But once within the folder, a sheath of manila sheets, unbound like notes awaiting the final decision of assemblage, invite the reader to explore the elegance of Gardner's writing.

The title pages suggest the word games or idea moldings that will follow: 'an heirship in waves' and 'utter' at first bring smiles of wordplay and later, on the many repeated reading this work requires, the meanings are clearly evident. Susana Gardner has an obvious affinity for the sea, as though the ocean is part of the pulsation of her own being:

'it is always the same coastline –  
with its unsteady  
grayed forecast – coastline  
carried and kept  
changeless as the  
sea is forward and

same – thus  
descending as the  
sea must seemingly descend  
as in its coastal carriage –  
each wave wearily catching and  
crashing into the next –  
a hatching – a harmony or honing  
(if you will) of this we this coast  
this I – long abandoned - a nest  
or home ever as even as it is just –  
only ever built in anticipation of  
its eventual unraveling of each  
moment in its remaking – a simple moment  
a cunning moment thus defined  
as the road is steep this road is blind  
and never ending of sea same  
sea sane sea erratic'

In her placement of words, kaleidoscopic manipulations of phrases and repeated thoughts Gardner, somewhat reluctantly it feels, invites us into her world, a world as aqueous and changing yet eternally rhythmically secure as the waves that crash and at times caress the shore of her meditation. Reading *herso* is intoxicating, seducing the reader into the siren call of the sea Gardner so passionately loves.

As if this experience weren't sufficient the final pages of this artful portfolio (subtitled 'irrational lithographies') are artworks created from words with varying fonts, inkings, and designed placements – each worthy of framing individually – but serving here as an apt closure to this fascinating poet's journey. This is a 'publication' of importance and one that serves to introduce a fresh and wholly appropriate way of offering poetry.



LEONARD KOSCIANSKI

# Night and Discovered Secrets: The Art of LEONARD KOSCIANSKI

Art Review by **Grady Harp**

The night that hides things from us.

— *Dante*

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night.

— *Pope*

**A** According to artist **LEONARD KOSCIANSKI**, in an article published in *Tamara*, the journal of Critical Postmodern Behavioral Science, “Critical postmodern artists depicted the ‘dark’ side of the postmodern world from their multiple perspectives. They did this with well-crafted works that may communicate on a broader less ‘elitist’ level. These artists are not neutral to their subjects.” Koscianski was in essence

defining an aspect of his own mysterious nocturnal paintings, paintings that invariably take place in the dark with the white light source from the moon being the sole agent that allows these nocturnes to become visible. While his paintings seek out the aspects of nature that are revealed by the safety of the sun’s demise, and while the ‘terrors of the night’ find their way into his explorations, his works may be frightening in idea while remaining lushly



SUBURBIA

beautiful evocations of mood and metaphor.

**Suburbia** is an appropriate starting point for the viewer unfamiliar with Koscianski's art. Simple houses in the cloudy night setting act as protective cages for the folk within, the artificial light from



BIRD DOG

windows suggest intrusion into the night world just as much as the approaching dog threatens the peace of the evening. **Bird Dog**

**Dog** pulls us into a closer look at the nighttime activities of nature's players – the concept of the hunter and the hunted is the act that mirrors our own frustrations and fears, the



FOOD CHAIN



**BUTTERFLY AND ORCHID WITH LEAVES**

metaphor of how we lead our lives under the sun is transformed into a menacing scene partially obscured by the dark of night. A equally sinister topic is shared in ***Food Chain***, a painting whose individual components of splashing silvery water, elegant reeds and moonlight houses on the banks of the water are as beautiful as the momentarily airborne fish capturing a leaping frog is portentous.

Not all of Koscianski's paintings deal with terror or fear. His works include pauses where flowers and insects interact as in ***Butterfly and Orchid with Leaves*** where the orchid may be the pollen food source of the



**STARGAZER LILY AND BUTTERFLY**

invading butterfly, but the seduction is far less threatening. In the more complex painting ***Stargazer Lily and Butterfly*** the interaction between seeker and sought becomes more a compositional unity, perhaps Koscianski's homage to the interdependency of cooperative nature – in night's arena as well as daylight's life among the suburbia dwellers.

Leonard Koscianski, then, stands as one of our more important representational painters: his works are at once visually stunning while they seduce us into reflecting on the nature of our daily lives – and our equally secretive nocturnal, darker sides of our minds.

# Jenny Gillespie

## Crystal Frogs

There were sad little things about her:

her small black muddy boots  
on the mat in front of her door,

meeting her mother at the outdoor concert,  
who upon seeing her Pez dispenser t-shirt, snarled  
*you're too old for that.*

And worthy turns:

the book she lent you, that you never read  
so she said *just keep it—*

or when she took your hand while you bled suddenly by the sugars  
and the creamers, having swallowed a pill that morning to rid yourself  
of what you could not call a gift,

and her coffee  
splashed a little on her sleeve, and she cursed

but kept her hand on yours, and led you out of the place.

Friends wash up like crystal frogs,  
strange and lovely among the shells and junk.

This one now retreats  
back out to where all waves begin.

# Housesitting

There were raccoons in the hibiscus, a pregnant one  
that slid down the telephone pole  
every black night like a fireman.

In the coach house lived a carpenter.  
He made low sleek benches for the rich.  
The smell of raw wood being broken,  
a faint saw-sound. Through his door  
open to that long August, I saw  
his shaved head bent and sweating.

I stayed in Wendy's garden apartment.  
Not a house, but still, an abandoned hearth.  
Pictures of her mother and her sister,  
both wayward souls, she'd said.  
A record player I didn't touch.  
Ivy clung to the window bars  
so I could not think entirely  
of a prison.

To watch three ancient cats  
seemed a job meant for someone  
more loving. I dodged tongues and tails,  
shut the bedroom door to their glares.

Now, remembering it, I might have liked  
the loneliness of that week  
but didn't know how to savor,  
aloneness not yet  
a sacred state to me.

The sirens and hardened  
bass beats of Humboldt Park  
rained and tangled,  
a thick, vibrating canopy  
of derelict heat, city id.  
And I always fell asleep  
so quickly and deeply  
to that unruly swarm.

**Jenny Gillespie lives in Chicago, IL where she works as an editor at Cricket Magazine Group. She wants to learn more about Gnosticism, travel to Japan, and go camping as soon as it gets warm out. Her favorite Beatles song is "I'm Looking Through you."**



# Mark Doty's *Theories and Apparitions*

Review by **Jeremy Hughes**

The collection's opening poem, "Pipistrelle", demonstrates several characteristics which are skilfully utilised throughout the book: it is in the first person; carefully unfolds its narrative; compares Doty to his companions and literary forbears and engenders an international parochialism.

The title refers to a species of bat encountered after an evening at the "inn" – yes, this poem is set in England (Hoarwithy, Herefordshire) – in countryside in which there are mares in "thorn-hedged" fields. The bat is an emblem of the differences between Doty and his friend Charles, the latter responding to the experience lyrically, while Doty is "filling in the tale". This is defined early on, Doty conscious of being set apart, being, perhaps, "a son of Whitman,/while Charles is an heir of Wordsworth." The poem's narrative begins by enumerating descriptive detail, the place, "not far from the Wye" (that's a river, by the way), and the immediate physical environment: "an ancient conifer's vast trunk."

The poem takes off, if that's the expression, at the moment Charles spots the bat, and Doty and his companions strive to see, recognise and understand it. In doing so it transpires that Doty can hear its directional echo-location, to be informed that "Only some people can hear their frequencies." This, then, is what sets him apart, the "two-syllabled piping," its "diminutive chime." Charles' rational and matter-of-fact explanation that these sounds are "navigational" further differentiates the companions' experiences. Doty's bat is an "emissary of evening," "the quick ambassador," "fleeting contraption" and "little Victorian handbag" (Ted Hughes would appreciate those).

In coming to terms with these differences, Doty makes clear reference to the act of making this poem, its "welter//of detail" and its "branching questions," and ends by revisiting the distinguishing elements:

**Listen to my poem, says Charles.  
A word in your ear, says the night.**

There are two forms of music here, that which Doty “can coax/into a line” and the music of the bat. The former is second nature, so to speak, the latter a new and augmenting personal “visitation”. It is a statement whose metaphor extends the poem beyond its immediacy, suggesting to the reader that the night is a poem in itself. The poem’s enquiry is reminiscent of Philip Larkin’s poems which “recognised” and “robed” events in preparation for pushing them over the final lines’ fence in a transcendent manner.

In “Theory of Beauty (Greenwich Avenue)”, this technique derives from an exploration of the contents of a clock shop window. Doty takes the co-hyponyms such as cuckoo, mantel and ormolu to determine the superordinate “*clock*”, what he calls “the range of possibilities within any single set”, concluding:

**...beauty resides not within  
individual objects but in the nearly  
unimaginable richness of their relation.**

“Theory of Multiplicity” also posits the relationship between ‘things’ but from a more egocentric position, as the ‘I’ feels “joined in a layering of singularities”:

**The next summer the garden would be sparse,  
not well tended, and offer no consolation,  
though even in its diminishment might be said  
to be one of its nearly endless dimensions.**

Both of these poems endeavour to record the ineffable in pre-modifying lexical choices whose semantics are amorphous – “unimaginable” and “endless”.

That determination to ask questions of experiences and specify the relationships between them is executed beautifully in “Theory of the Sublime”. The structure ‘Russian-dolls’ three artworks: taking part in an artist’s installation piece during which Doty considers Gaudi’s vision that is the Sagrada Familia, both contained within the poem itself. Three disciplines – art, architecture, poetry – meld into one, conjoining the everyday – “barking, a dog run down in the square” – the sublime – “the crazy excelsis/of the tower” –and the highly poetic as he descends from the highest pinnacles of the cathedral:

coming to rest, like a pigeon after a long high flight,  
as if to land too swiftly and cease the motion of wings  
would somehow injure the heart.

As he takes part in the artist's work (being filmed clapping), he enters his personal interior world and "the clapping is a night-crowd of leaves/ billowing out to obscure the quick chips of stars" which leads to the reminiscence of the cathedral visit. He becomes lost in this, the artwork is transformational, the experience understood, the poem completed.

As Doty has contributed to the artist's work, he has inhabited the studio's physical space, his own interior and Barcelona. Place is not so important, it seems, than what it is that happens there. From a quiet English village to a vibrant Manhattan street, poetry 'happens' (the international parochialism) everywhere, even in one's own home. In "Theory of Incompletion" DIY is the unlikely starting point for the effect classical music has upon the individual. Interior decoration is juxtaposed with the "gorgeous rising tiers of it/ceasing briefly then cascading again,/ as if baroque music were a series of waterfalls//pouring in the wrong direction." The painting is unfinished when *Semele* ends and though the poem is, there is the suggestion in the final line that Doty is commenting upon his poetic calling, his achievement, that he has much more to do: "I am nowhere near the end of my work". It is actually the end of the book, a place from which to consider the volume as a whole, one which appropriates art to beget art, makes the apparently mundane a fit subject for poetry, and is conscious of its contribution to the wider world of poetry wittingly and inherently. The theories and apparitions of the title bring together rational and spiritual (some might say poetic) responses to the world about us, so that it is clear that poetry is a valid means of exploration of what we seek to understand. This is no less so in "Theory of Marriage" which opens with "I have a slight thrumming aura of backache" which conflates sound with physical sensation and 'atmosphere', making it both immediate and memorable. It is the plinth upon which a poem about a massage is piled: descriptive detail, loquacious narrative, deictic immediacy ("here and here" as the masseur presses), and the internal world "vanishing again into the heaven/of rubbed temples". Doty's poetry nourishes, explaining the world in such a way that makes us consider our immediate experiences with more care and newly-focused vision, and encourages us to scrutinise what poetry offers us in the first place.



*“The places I paint exist in the purgatory of the everyday, filling in the spaces of the in-between, and overlooked. They are locations that are non-destinations, particularly North American kinds of nowhere, at once ubiquitous and yet largely unseen. It is not the depiction of a specific high volume retail space, like theaters, gas stations or food courts that interest me most. In painting the backdrop of our common cultural denominator, the work is able to speak of more than just its content.*”

*It is always the individual work that is the ultimate arbiter for its constituent parts. The paintings are fundamentally synthetic in nature, and represent not only the experience of direct observation, but also an appreciation and awareness of paintings and painters of the past. The finished work is the sum total of a series of continual refinements and elaborations, all of which begin with drawing and preparatory sketches. My aim is to create work that speaks of the present, yet is able to reference painting’s long history. Light is singularly important for me, as it serves to organize the work and is the one element that all aspects of the painting must agree on to convey.”*

# Marc Trujillo



# M

**ARC TRUJILLO** was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, received a BA in Art from The University of Texas at Austin, and an MFA in Painting from Yale University School of Art. Yale awarded him with three things while he was in graduate school from 1992 to 1994; a scholarship which paid for around half of his tuition, the Ellen Battell Stoeckel Trust Fellowship which paid his salary as a teaching assistant at the Yale University Summer School of Music and Art, and upon graduating from Yale he was awarded the Ely Harwood Schless Memorial Fund Prize, which was the highest honor the faculty awarded to a graduating MFA.

He has continued to exhibit nationally on both coasts. His work has been featured in numerous publications including *Artforum*, *ARTnews*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Southwest Art*, and *Artweek*.

Of the awards he received since leaving graduate school, the most significant are the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fund Fellowship in Painting in 2008, the Rosenthal Family Award for Painting from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2008, and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Award, which he received in 2001.

## Q&A

*You are known for your scenes of people doing what they normally do while shopping. Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating this art?*

The real first step is what I think a painting is, and how what I'm experiencing might be able to make an interesting painting. For me this means a lot of museum visits. I was at the Prado and the National Gallery London last June and the Louvre in December for my Guggenheim-funded travel. For me the Prado is the best museum for painting in the world. The collection has depth and they group the works of an artist together so you can really investigate their work, and of course the Louvre and the National Gallery London have stunning collections of paintings as well. Standing in a room full of Velasquez at the Prado, to confront yourself with taste that refined calibrates you as a painter. Having gathered together some idea about what paintings are supposed to look like, the next step is to start drawing. Before I stretch up a canvas or cut a panel I'll do a grisaille in acrylic to compose the painting. Drawing is my tool for thinking about what I'm painting. Then I underpaint and work on the painting which is the acid test for any general ideas I may have had before I started working on the painting itself. Making the paintings is what defines your area of investigation for you, as opposed to starting with an idea and executing it. So my ritual is a cycle; looking at great paintings to define painting for myself, looking at the world to see what I think might make an interesting painting as



14311 Ventura Boulevard drawing



14311 Ventura Boulevard underpainting

I've come to understand and define it, and testing all of this by making the paintings themselves which sends me back to the museums again.

*How else has your environment influenced your work?*

I'm from a part of New Mexico that has about a 2,000 foot variance in altitude and clear, dry air; my sense of my own significance was always mediated by an awareness of being a small figure in a large landscape. This makes sense to me and manifests itself in the paintings as small figures in large spaces. Also I paint our shared environment, the world we've made for ourselves.

*How do you feel about formal training?*

The faculty at Yale helped me critically examine the philosophical core I operate

from, so it was useful, I did also learn about painting, but I think artists interested in graduate school should be clear that they should be expecting criticism more than instruction.

*Have any of your mistakes become a success?*

I think we're always at least slightly mistaken, the cycle I refer to above is for me a way of moving towards my dead betters. So my hope is that my mistakes can be stepping stones.

*What is next for Marc Trujillo?*

I have a solo show up right now at Hackett-Freedman Gallery in San Francisco and am giving a talk at the Long Beach Museum of Art with my friends David Simon and Sean Cheetham on April 25th. The next thing for me is to get back to work.



MARC TRUJILLO

14311 Ventura Boulevard oil on canvas over panel 43" x 56"





1000 San Fernando Road oil on canvas over panel 42" x 69"





6800 Hayvenhurst Avenue oil on canvas over panel 38" x 71"





6400 Woodley Avenue oil on canvas over panel 21" x 33"



# Seth Michelson

**Seth Michelson lives in Los Angeles, CA. He is author of the chapbooks *Maestro of Brutal Splendor* and *Kaddish for My Unborn Son*.**

**His translation of the book *El ghetto*, by Argentine poet Tamara Kamenszain, is forthcoming from Syracuse University Press.**

## Toy Store Lyric

Strange times, strange land,  
my wheelchair shines like a flaming chariot  
as I race waist-high through the toy store,  
ten-years-old and disoriented.  
I weave through mothers young and old,  
their toddlers scampering about me  
like frenzied bees  
lost in a garden  
of bright-colored roses  
awash in fluorescent lighting.  
And when mom says *No*,  
*not today, Honey*, how each one's face  
becomes a sad violin: its thin solo  
heard on a wintry day  
when the sky's gone gray and perfectly rigid,  
until a mist begins to fall,  
so soft you hardly feel it.

# Dysfunctional Love Poem Built of Holes

Big with baby in belly, my wife  
wobbles fast as she can  
from Exam Room Two to Trauma Three,  
where her new patient is wheeled in:  
unconscious, nineteen, on a blood-soaked gurney,  
Ezmeralda L., female Hispanic, smiles up  
from behind a plastic mask.  
Her eyes, big and hazel, don't blink.  
There's a jagged hole  
in the back of her head. A sheriff explains:  
*possible suicide, we found a .45 at the scene, the girl  
long gone, brought in only*  
to be pronounced, dissected, claimed.  
And my wife directs her team: strips  
Ezmeralda to her cocoa skin,  
bags her watch, big gold hoop earrings,  
the small silver cross that was her nose ring.  
They leave only the body and its wound,  
that dumb equation for all worldly suffering,  
and a week later it'll be my wife:  
stripped to skin, no watch, no jewelry,  
as she opens in red cascades, screaming  
*my god! my god!* while pushing.  
And in recovery the next morning,  
sore and naked beneath a thin white sheet,  
she'll read the homicide report online  
over steaming oatmeal with raisins: *a young Latina,  
dead of domestic abuse,  
her boyfriend, Juan C., safely in custody.*

# Facing Facts

A man strips naked, paints his face pink, and bows  
to a wall of gods  
as he whimpers prayers, cramped with fear  
at news of his father's fever.

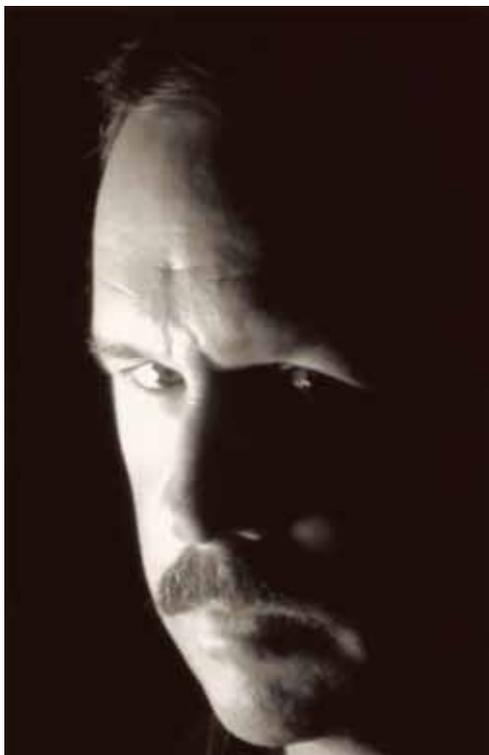
At the same time, another man  
in another nook in the selfsame sphere  
ponders his reflection in the rattly window  
of his commuter train shooting homeward:  
his tie hangs loose, late-day stubble  
occludes half his face, and he wonders why  
he thinks of suicide  
with every passing bridge.

And now this: front-page news:  
*Woman Killed By Flying Sting Ray*, the fish  
leapt from turquoise sea  
to motorboat, struck her face  
like a slapstick cannonball.

So much indignity in death, in the great  
backward slide to dust,  
lovers' bodies, once wet with lust,  
now a scattering of bitter motes, our greatest  
ancestors and historical nemeses  
swirling in the ceaseless wind,  
that's what's bequeathed, recapitulated,  
the air dotted with their tiny ghosts,  
the golden flecks we breathe in  
ineluctably to live.

# WILLIAM MARTIN FOGG: Respecting the Revelation of Age

Art Review by Grady Harp



WILLIAM FOGG

As a white candle  
In a holy place,  
So is the beauty  
Of an aged face.

— Joseph Campbell

# W

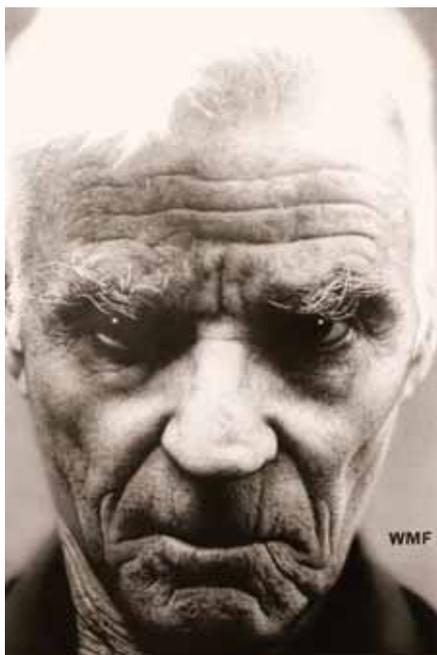
ILLIAM FOGG

looks at faces some would call 'ravaged by age' and finds the sculpted personalities of his models who have journeyed through lives both ordinary and extraordinary. Trained in both illustration and fine art painting and drawing, Fogg continues to devote a large part of his artistic career to teaching, not only in California at the premiere schools of art, but also in Switzerland, Turkey, and Colombia. His art has been a topic of controversy not only in museum and gallery exhibitions, but in the many journals and books for which he not only creates illustrations but also in-depth articles on art, literature, film and popular culture.

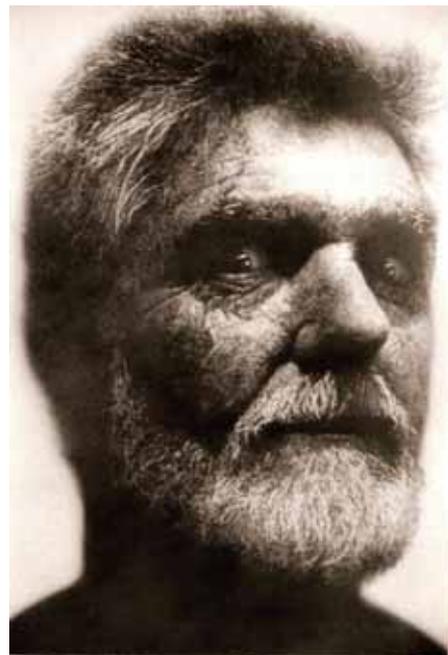
Though Fogg continues to paint with the brush on occasion, he now concentrates his ability to observe the intricacies of faces, in ink at times but primarily in charcoal. Not interested in the glamour that attracts many representational artists, Fogg instead finds beauty in documenting the effects of age



UNTITLED #12



UNTITLED #11



MR. PHILLIPS

on skin and hair and eyes and personalities. His results may not be seen as flattering: altering defects with softening lines or ignoring distortions interests him not at all.

What pulls Fogg's focus are men and women whose faces are deeply wrinkled, whose eyes suggest a history of having lived in a not always simple world, 'models' whose countenance suggests the passage of time and the dignity of having lived though it all.

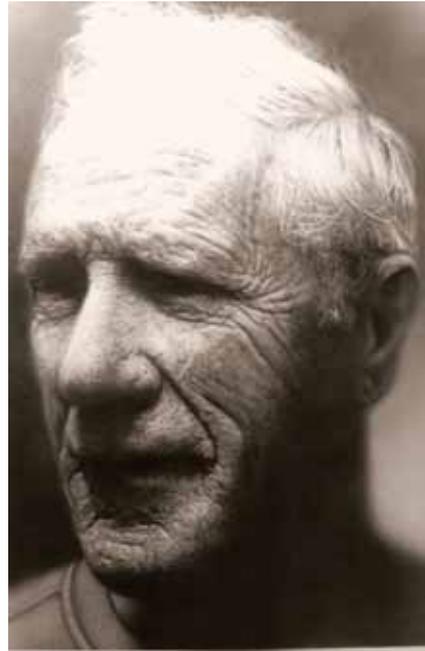
At first loathe to title any of his works (the usual moniker for these drawings is "Untitled" etc.), he now adds the name of each model as his reputation for artistic excellence grows. Fogg's technique includes the camera, allowing him to take multiple images of his subject in varying

degrees of light – all for increasing the visual information for his drawings done in studio. Many of the works are begun in full sunlight, using the intensity of light and shadow that natural light source allows. This choice of lighting suggests Fogg's desire for looking at the human face in the light of day, the manner in which we all live and attempt to alter our appearance artificially – as in **Untitled #12** and **Untitled #11** (a portrait of artist Don Bachardy).

Fogg also is fascinated with the darker elements his model's faces reveal. In **Mr. Phillips** we see a sinister soul, in **Untitled #15** only a portion of a face creeps out of the shadow, while in **Paul** the darkness seems overridden by the gentle kindness of the portion of the



UNTITLED #15



PAUL

face that is visible. Recently Fogg has tightened his frame, finding more detail and a more seductive invitation to discover the model by showing only portions of the face – as in **Mr. Starret** and **Patrick**.

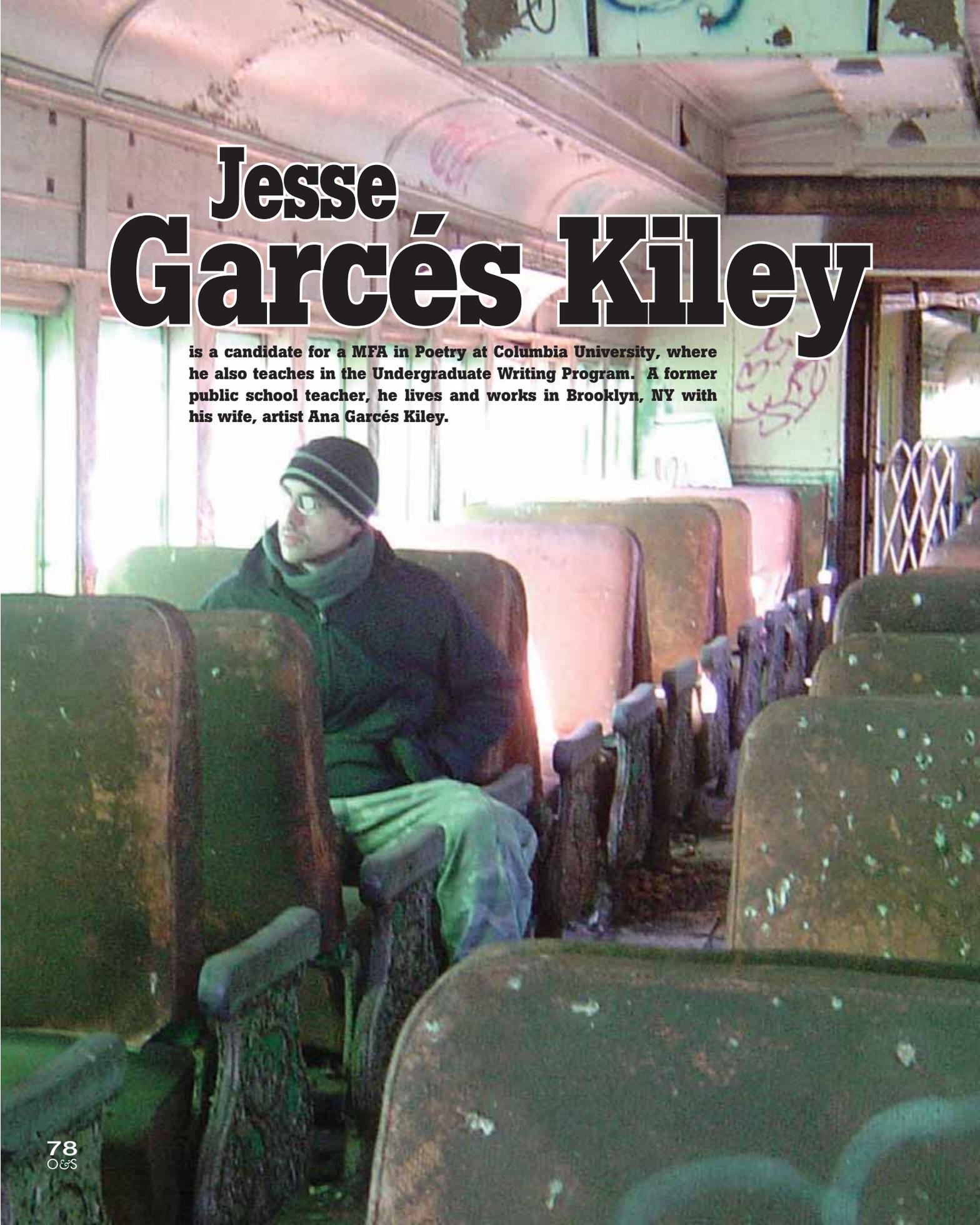
William Martin Fogg observes and reproduces what his sensitive eyes absorb as information and he leaves to our imagination only the personalities of these for the most part nameless characters. The portraits are not cruel, nor are they altered to erase reality. They are monuments to the passage of time and windows into the fascinating lives of the ordinary people we pass in the street. The result is absolute realism and more: Fogg shows more than a simple reflecting mirror can investigate. Observe the artist's photograph!



MR. STARRET



PATRICK



# Jesse Garcés Kiley

is a candidate for a MFA in Poetry at Columbia University, where he also teaches in the Undergraduate Writing Program. A former public school teacher, he lives and works in Brooklyn, NY with his wife, artist Ana Garcés Kiley.

# Cooling Off in Baghdad

They still can't take a predawn  
hard-on for granted, or a wireless stroll  
through a wavering world of fortified  
milk and secret lip tattoos,  
but at least when Arab boys jump

in Baghdad they splash, throwing long  
brown arms and geysers of white water  
against an impossible aquamarine and pink  
coral composition that Miami would writhe for,  
rub its tit and give its rib for. No matter

that crawl of razor wire curling the haze  
out past the palms, or the shatterproof shades  
of the porcelain boy with a gun. Beneath a blonde sky  
distilled into a front page dye-pulp spread,  
they too can glisten when wet. They too can jump.

# Cheyenne Dancing

Once, while twisting,  
she showed me her constellation  
of scars and cigarette burns  
spangling up her forearm.

All wings, no feet,  
always too thin –  
my words failed  
as leaves and birds do.

She consoled my shoulder.  
She murmured softly.  
She swayed, and did not need  
me to hold her.

# Titus

He knows I won't be back,  
knows I'm the ghost of the husk  
of a cicada wing shed in the sun,

but he still wants to hold shadow-hands,  
to whistle and show me the pool hall  
where there are no eight balls  
and the cowboys play on one side  
and everyone else on the other.

Oh Titus. Rosebud Titus.  
Butcher sticky cheeks, pale  
and pepper-seed freckled,  
feather hair a field of wheat on fire  
and always asking – *you got a dollar?*

Titus without arms. Titus with two heads.  
Titus pinching and punching my shadow,  
skipping the road like a heart-popped buffalo.  
*I wanna to learn to see in the dark.*  
*Can I spit in your footprints?*

Pointing his nose  
at greasegrass hills to say  
*Sitting Bull's my grandpa.*  
*Wanna see where he's really buried?*  
*Want some gum?*

# It's Best to Sow Seeds by the Light of it

Forget what's been said of Full Moons.

We did not writhe, we did not howl  
and spit. We were simple as night harvests.

I'd come to you in tinctures  
of clouds and wind-fingered branches,

blossoming in the hoarfrost  
to crawl in through your window,

to cradle you as you once were  
and hum to you in the dark.

You loved my humming,

the old song you now say sounds  
like Genesis before the dawn.

As the Pleiades sank, you'd sleep,  
your bird heart a steady bump on my thumb.

Swans never know what they are  
asleep upon the water.



# Arlene Ang

is the author of four poetry collections, the most recent being a collaborative work with Valerie Fox, "Bundles of Letters Including A, V and Epsilon" (Texture Press, 2008). She serves as staff editor for *The Pedestal Magazine and Press 1*. She lives in Spinea, Italy. More of her work may be viewed at [www.leafscape.org](http://www.leafscape.org)

## Ownership

The .38 Special has  
a weight that inserts itself

in the body. Mother cleaned it,  
like a house every time

she sent us out to play.  
As we closed the front door,

we could hear her talking  
as if she were with child again.

She called it Philip.  
Growing up, there had been

four of us, but no photos  
of a fourth son. Mother kept

everything hidden. She learned  
she couldn't have anymore

children. She slept  
with the gun under her pillow.

She taught us never  
to touch it. She showed us

a tree with the bullet hole  
she put in its trunk.

She made us touch  
the black rim, one at a time,

until we understood  
silence.

# Disconnection

It's something as mechanical  
as eating an egg sandwich  
in bed. The laptop cooler  
sans laptop catches the crumbs.  
The fan is always on.  
I press the side of my face  
against it and pretend I'm a fridge.  
I have a pear in place of a brain,  
its bruises apparent only when  
sliced open. I have two bottles of Pepsi  
for lungs and ketchup for breasts.

Waist down, I'm frozen  
and empty. I have a daughter  
who presses her ear against  
the sole of my left foot.  
In school, she learned that  
as long as the body maintains  
a pulse, it could be made to walk  
again. She keeps a white mouse  
for her research. She takes it  
out of the cage now and trails its tail  
up my leg. She waits for me  
to open my eyes, to feel something.

ARLENE ANG

# The Girl in the Bathtub

As she sinks in water,  
its level rises. She reclines  
and her ears fill up.  
She's convinced  
she's not dying—because  
she knows the sense  
of hearing is the last to go,  
and she can still hear  
someone upstairs vacuuming,  
hitting the furniture  
in a way that reminds her  
of a meat tenderizer. She stares  
at the ceiling lamp  
until she is blind to it.  
Her hair comes away as if it were  
acrylic paint. Inside,  
she is growing nausea.  
It pushes the reconstruction  
of her nipples to the surface.  
To lift herself from tub,  
she has to use both arms.  
Something of herself creaks  
from her left knee.  
When she slips out, she is  
an organ again that is destined  
to belong to another body.

# Donna Hilbert's Poetry

Review by David Caddy

The Long Beach poet and writer, Donna Hilbert, has been writing about death, grieving, class, alienation, motherhood, displacement and survival in a series of books since 1990. Brought up in the Red River Valley of Oklahoma near the Texas border, she has spent most of her life in southern California. What is distinctive about her work is not so much its seeming transparency and purity of language but rather its deployment and repetition of certain key words, phrases and poems throughout her oeuvre in order to give it semantic structure and weight. This enables her to expose unresolved aspects of the human situation and constraints on the self, without prejudice or sentimentality that reverberate over time. Her work can be read as a fusion and extension from a feminist perspective of some of the literary techniques employed by Charles Bukowski and Raymond Carver. The use of precise economic and social detail, which needs to be examined for its context and omissions, dominates over form. This is evident in poems, such as 'Economy Lesson', 'Interior Decoration' and 'Aunt Velma' in *Deep Red* (Event Horizon Press 1993) and 'Consciousness Raising' in *Transforming Matter* (Pearl Editions 2000 pp. 31-32). There is a striving to convey raw emotion within sharply defined social situations, as in poems such as, 'Craving' in *Transforming Matter* (page 22). Repetition is utilised to move beyond the singular moment and ordinary things and objects, such as letters, shoes, dresses, playing cards, lunch boxes, magazines and so on, accrue extra meaning.

Hilbert reinforces this sense of unresolved matters returning by repeating certain poems in subsequent collections. They are used as echoes and to potentially show through ambiguity new meaning in their different context. Take the example of 'Rank', which appears as the first poem in the Dear Heart section of *Transforming Matter* (page 27), a collection dedicated to her husband killed by a motorist whilst cycling his bicycle early on the morning of 25 August 1998 and concerned with the social context of the narrator's love affair with her husband. 'Rank' can be read as a loving memory of a man who obeyed his mother in teaching the narrator how to play bridge. This is supported by the context of the other poems in the collection. When 'Rank' reappears in *Traveler in Paradise* (Pearl Editions 2004 page 51) as the third poem in the Transforming Matter section it can be read more as a poem of social control, class and fitting in where the emphasis is more on the narrator and mother-in-law rather than mother-in-law and son or narrator and son.

Here's *Rank*

I never wore white shoes  
before memorial Day  
or suede in summer.

I crossed my legs  
primly at my ankle,  
wore a panty girdle  
and a full-length slip,  
no shadow of body  
apparent through my dress.  
I knew better than  
to crackle gum,  
or walk down the street  
cigarette dangling  
from my mouth,  
knew better than  
to pierce my ears,  
like some common girl.  
Still, his mother  
rooted out the tell-tale  
signs, traces of a family  
line who worked for wages  
in “mediocre” jobs.  
The day after  
we’d spent the night together  
and got caught,  
he came to my apartment  
with a deck of cards  
that he spread across  
the kitchen table,  
saying Mother says  
I have to teach you bridge  
so we’ll have something in common.  
He arranged the cards  
in suits to demonstrate  
their ranking,  
clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades,  
saying spades are the boss  
trump, outrank everything,  
always.

‘Rank’ works as a compressed narrative where each detail has meaning and power that echoes over time and shows the upwardly mobile, transgressive narrator out trumped by the superior class of her future mother-in-law. It is a poem about transgression and consequent exposure.

It was the *Transforming Matter* collection that led to the making of the short film *Grief Becomes Me: A Poet’s Journey*, by director Christine Fugate, an interweaving of documentary footage and narrative interpretations of the poetry. Made by a team of women filmmakers, the film explores Hilbert’s depiction of death and renewal and reveals some of the inner life of grief. The title *Grief Becomes Me* indicates an enfolding and overpowering of a self by an intense emotion as well as fitness to and by implication beauty within that state.

Here is the poem from *Transforming Matter* (page 45):

*Grief Becomes Me*

You've never looked better  
my friends Edward and Neil  
tell me and lean close  
for a clearer view.  
I know what they mean  
and believe it's true,  
the same way earth and sky  
wash to a radiant clean  
after relentless days of rain.  
How you would present me  
with pieces of sea glass  
tumbled smooth  
from journeying canyons  
and rivers to the ocean  
and back again  
washing up at our feet –  
bits of amber, green,  
and the rarest stellar blue.  
Everything pure and impure  
has leached from the soil  
of my face,  
and in the corners of my eyes,  
hard crystals form.

The poem's focus on perception and representation emphasises the need to look closer at things. The lines 'Everything pure and impure / has leached from the soil / of my face,' scorches the notion of outer appearance reflecting inner being. It is the final line that shifts the poem's attention back to chemistry and process. The use of 'hard' in the final line takes the possible meaning of crystal away from any pleasing geometrical shape to crystallisation and the difference between glass and crystal solids. The poem thus ends with an appeal to the difference between solids and glasses as representations and the knowledge that the process of forming a glass does not release the latent heat of fusion.

Hilbert's latest book, *The Green Season* (World Parade Books 2008), is a poetry collection sandwiched between two short stories. The title plays on the multilayered meaning of green as an adjective and harks back to the poem of displacement, 'Seattle' in *Transforming Matter* (page 30). In 'Seattle' the narrator is as green as the evergreen trees and grasses of Seattle and is 'green too at nineteen', and is within the range of meaning of OED 8, not fully developed, OED 8c, still raw, and OED 8d simple, unsophisticated, gullible and so on. There is the underlying possibility of implying OED 3a as in green with envy, although this is not fully supported. This mention of green, a recurrent theme throughout the oeuvre, comes with references to the novelist, Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* and *The Heart of the Matter* and has the narrator so lonely that she engages wrong numbers in conversation. The use of green in the title *The Green Season* moves from adjective to noun and implies OED 2c a season of the year, characterised by abundance of verdure, OED 10b

retaining the traces of newness, perceptibly fresh or recently set and not completely hardened and OED 9 as a noun, verdant. There is also contained with this OED 6b adjective, of immaterial things, especially the memory of a person, which echoes throughout part of the collection. It is therefore using 'green' as a marker over time, place and social situation so that it echoes in a new context and shows a movement forwards. The collection charts a continuing journey towards connectedness, of self and to family and friends that is thwarted by opposition, setback and death. The past is still shaping the future in the present, memory and dreams, and experience, family relations and psychological history temper the promise of renewal. The path to regeneration is thus strewn with psychic markers and this is represented in the collection by previously published poems and stories.

The opening story, 'The Early Days', from the award-winning collection, *Women Who Make Money and the Men Who Love Them* (Staple First Editions 1994), concerns a woman's journey out of grief to connectedness with the world through language. The social detail is clearly defined in relation to the narrator's confinement within the gender role assigned by her family and class. The narrator, often with her mother, uses new words, such as cantaloupe, foreign words and swearing as ways into a newer and better social space and as buffers against failure. Cantaloupe can be read as a sign of health, fresh diet, as well as new word and part of the journey outwards. However, the narrator fails to find a way out, fails to connect and disintegrates in suffering. The happiness of the title poem, 'The Green Season', is prefaced by a sequence of poems, including 'Domestic Arts', 'Madeleine' and 'The Explanations' which show a generation of alcoholic middle class women handing down their coping mechanisms to their daughters and neighbours. Here the narrator as a young mother rebels against this and attempts to break free of their great unhappiness. They are all in some way seeking a language for hunger, grief and anger and other meanings for passion and what it is to be a woman. The narrator as a mature woman operates more on instinct in 'This, Happily' when she takes a new lover and knows that competition is not far away.

*He Who Takes My Sorrow Away*

*He who takes my sorrow away  
my friend has named as her lover.  
Who wouldn't wish for that,  
if only for an hour or two,  
that sorrow might  
be lifted with the skirt,  
discarded like a soiled shirt.*

Hilbert refuses any easy closure or notion of healing after grief in favour of a psychologically more probing perspective of self and others, self and self. The collection has an uplifting philosophical poise, highlighted in the poem, 'Waste', and although remarkably close to memoir, is profound in its critique of therapy as social control and understanding of the necessity for a set of historical and psychological markers that underpin a narrative self on the brink of renewal.



# Edith Lebeau

[www.edithlebeau.com](http://www.edithlebeau.com)



*"I create women who tell their own stories through the look in their eyes and their unique expression. The emotion comes from the look first and foremost and is amplified with certain colors and a vaporous background, depending on the emotion expressed. These women are inspired by mythology, movies, fairy tales and pop culture."*

**E** DITH LEBEAU grew up in Beloeil, a little town of Quebec, Canada. As a young girl, her artistic development was influenced by a fascination with popular culture, Greek, Roman, and Celtic mythology, movies and fairytales – influences that continue to be seen in her work today. Lebeau mostly paints female figures, portraying them as superheroes, villains, goddesses, and nymphs, their look being the most important thing in her work: they tell their own story through their expressions and emotions. A certain ambiguity is intentional –Lebeau often blurs the story to encourage the audience to make it their own, letting the character question the viewer. She is represented by Strychnin Gallery.

## Q&A

### *Which artist/photographer do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?*

I admire Michael Hussar very much as he has his own way of creating beauty. His subjects are dark and disturbing characters and he creates a special atmosphere with his use of strong contrasts between extreme lights and shadows. I also really love his use of bright colors, mostly his reds, like for the painting "Widow". The painting is mostly dark brown, black and with shades of white. But the character has enormous ruby red lips that looks shiny and almost like a jewel, while the character's face is filled with flies – the viewer is repulsed by the flies and at the same time attracted by the shiny details and bright colors. His use of repulsion/attraction and other contrasts are what makes his works special and beautiful to me. I'd love to be able to work the colors and lights like he does. His use of colors and uses of details inspire me a lot.

However, the artist that has influenced me the most is neither a painter nor a photographer but a musician: it is the aesthetics of Tori Amos. I've listened to her music since I was little. She recreates herself as a different character in every album and song that she makes. Those characters always tell their own story. That's pretty much what I try to do, only I do it in painting. Tori Amos speaks about her songs like they were a girl. She often uses the pronoun "she" when she talks about a song.

The things that inspire me the most in Tori's songs is that they are often sad, mysterious and bring a lot of emotions: from pain and anger to sweetness. Tori Amos also refers sometimes to mythology like she did for her third album Boys for Pele, Pele being the goddess of volcano.

I like to create women that have a world of their own and emotions that are particular to each of them. Each of Tori's songs has a different emotion and a different story that touches you differently. That's what I want to do. I want my women to express or tell something different to the viewer. A woman can be painted more than once but tell something different and become another character every time. Every painting is approached individually. Once the girl, the expression and story is chosen the colors or background can have a similar aesthetic as another painting but the expression is always exclusive and individual.

### *How do you feel about formal training?*

Well, it helped me a lot. I don't know if my work would be the same without it. I had a lot of fun at school, meeting artists, learning about new artist and old. It helped me to learn a bit more about me and learn what I liked in art: painting.

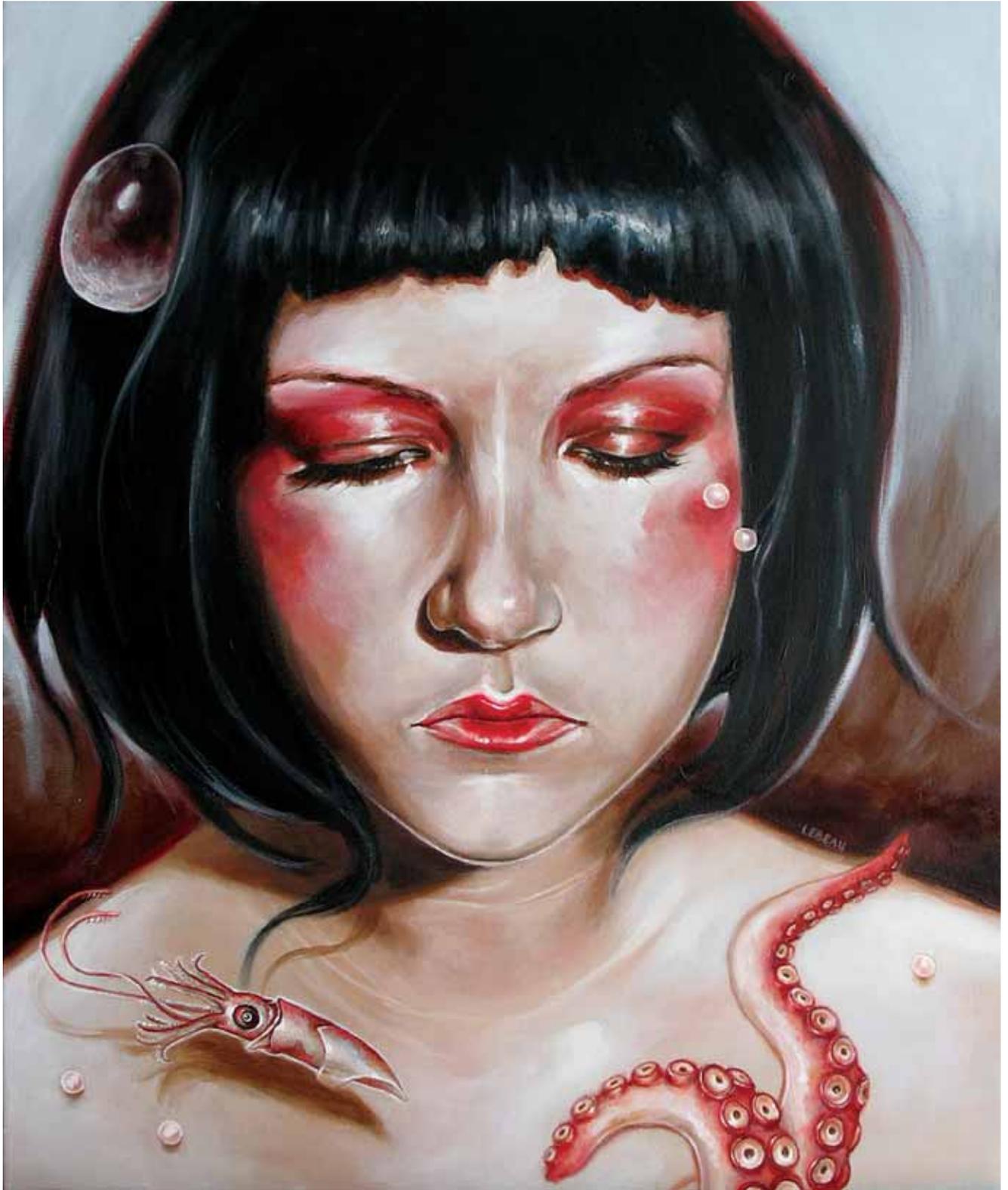
I've been drawing women since a very young age but I've experimented a bit more with painting at school, although I worked further on perfecting my painting skills after school on my own. School helped me to know what I want to express in art: stories, emotion, all about women, but I don't think that formal training is necessary to become a good artist. There are some great artist that didn't have formal training and that are just as good as those who had it. But in my case, it helped me to find myself a bit.

### *Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?*

Yes, I do. It always starts in books. I do some research in my great mythology book and symbols dictionaries, and even on the internet. When my subject is chosen, I do a photo shoot with models. I usually work with girls that I know. I love to work with friends, they know my work and so I find it a bit more personal. Once the shooting is done, I choose the picture that I feel has the right emotion to go with the character and that says best what I want to express. Then when all of this is done, I put the music on and start to paint.

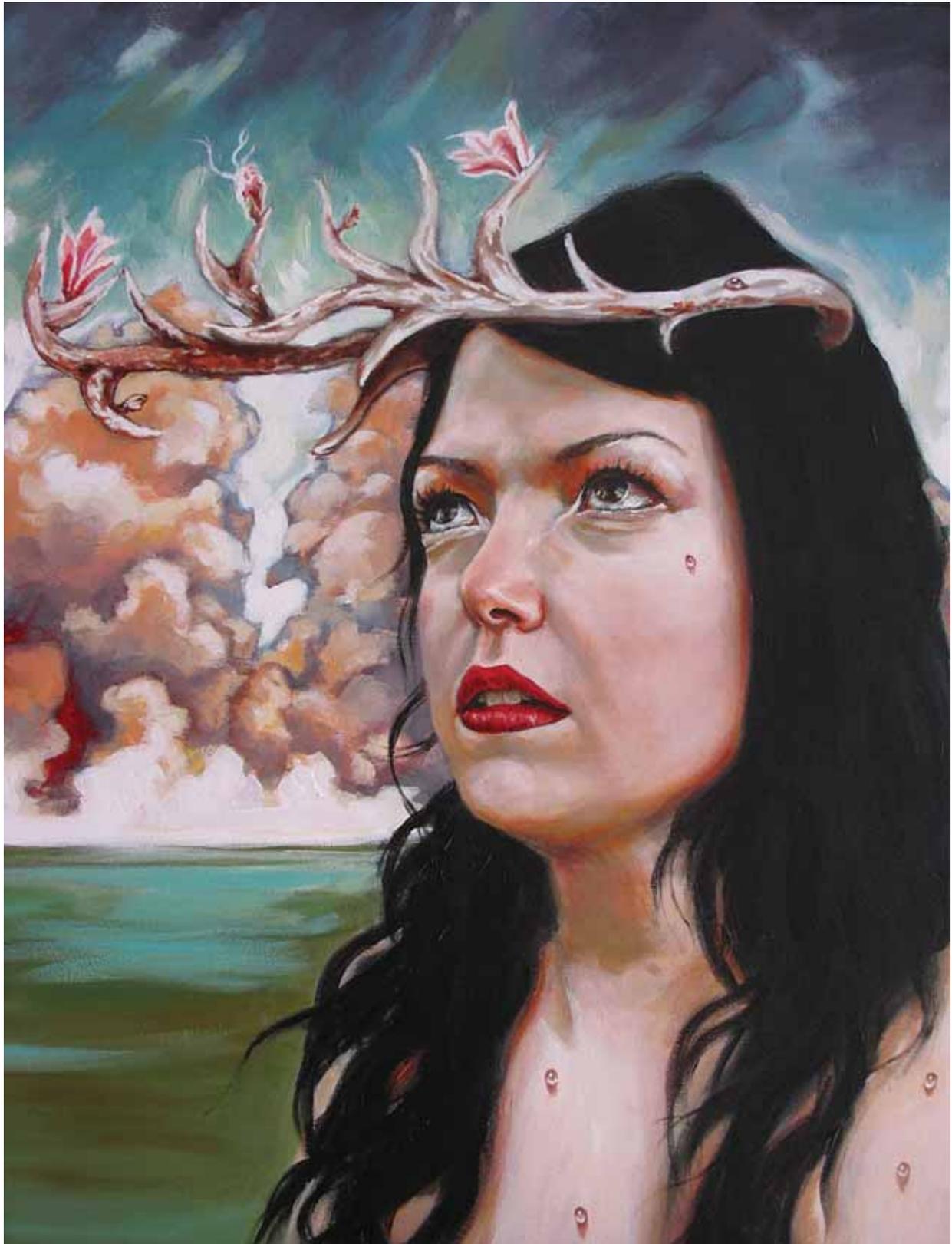
### *How do you bring emotion across to a flat surface?*

I don't know exactly. I think to me, the emotion comes first and foremost from the look in the character's eye. So I have to choose the right picture from the shoot first, and then take it from there - once the look is done, everything that surrounds the character and the chosen colors will increase this emotion. I like to create strong women but also strong women that have a weakness or doubt in the eye. Doubt, pain and sadness, anger – these reappear often in my work. I don't know exactly why I choose those strong emotions but it's probably because strong emotion touches you more, both the viewer and me. A painting of someone that cries will touch me more than one that shows someone who is smiling, and mostly will make me ask myself more question about the character depicted. I also love to create tension, the little things that make the viewer question the character. I like to create a bit of drama, mysteries with a fairy tale feel to it.



EDITH LEBEAU

The Octopus Woman acrylic on canvas 20" x 24"



EDITH LEBEAU

Hamadryad acrylic on canvas 20" x 24"



EDITH LEBEAU

Hamadryad III acrylic on canvas 20" x 24"



EDITH LEBEAU

The Red Queen acrylic on canvas 24" x 30"

# Heavenly Shades of Night Are Falling

SHORT STORY BY **KIRK CURNUTT**

(Part Two)

Before the fat man ever even opened his mouth a bead of sweat what looked big as a penny dropped down his forehead. It ran straight between his eyebrows to the nub of his nose, which was round and scabby as a rutabaga. Sis could tell it bothered the man. His pupils had to cross a bit to watch it. He had plenty of time to surveil the driblet because a scratchy song with a *bom-bom* beat was galloping through the P.A., loud enough to vibrate the bleacher seats: *From countryways comes the word / Of a marvelous headless bird / With more right to crow than your average cock / 'Cause he survived the chopping block!*

“Hey!” Little Pruitt went. “That’s Davy Crockett’s song! They stole that!”

He was so surprised he didn’t seem to notice that he’d let go of Sis’s hand.

If the plagiarism troubled other attendees, they didn’t speak up. The crowd began to clap along to the song, bringing a smile to the fat man’s face. His hands started going in circles just like Helicopter’s as he encouraged the audience to join the chorus: *Headless, Headless Mike ... Don’t need a noggin to live!* Soon the

man was waving an imaginary baton as if directing a church choir, that bead still clinging to his nub. Then, as the song ended, he flicked it off like he was shooing a horsefly. Sis was convinced she saw the drip zing left, lit up by the colored bulbs strung overhead.

“Friends and churchgoers of Shelby County, I know you being good salt-of-the-earth people as you are you’ve witnessed some mighty strange things in your lifetimes. ...” The man sounded exactly like the barker outside the tent—like every barker Sis had ever heard—though this was the first she’d ever seen with a rutabaga for a nose. “You’ve no doubt seen your fair share of two-headed cows and earless goats and maybe even a flesh-eating frog if you’ve been truly blessed. I’m here to guarantee, though, that no spectacle you may’a stumbled upon has ever been quite as bizarre as the one I shall unveil to you momentarily. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, you’ve heard the legend and shared the tales and now you’re going to revel at nature’s oddest mystery, one that science itself can’t quite explain, the mystery of how something so simple as your average everyday

barnyard rooster can possibly make his way in the world with nothing but air north of his shoulders, a gully where his gullet out to be, space for a brain as blank as the miles from here to Mars.... Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you ... the one and only ... Mike the Headless Chicken!"

With both hands he jerked the apron off the cage. Immediately the girls sitting in front of Sis and Little Pruitt leaped up, causing several surrounding adults to hiss and crane until a man in overalls reached across Little Pruitt's back to grab Phyllis Metcalf's shoulder and give her a shake. When the kids sat down Sis could see what looked like a heap of dirty feathers in one corner of the cage.

"That ain't real," she inadvertently whispered.

"That ain't *white*," Little Pruitt answered. "The picture I seen of Mike he was whiter'n popcorn."

The fat man stuck his hand through the door of the cage, gently bringing the black bird into the scrutiny of the light. Sitting in his palm the thing didn't seem much more than a sack of coins or marbles or maybe even seed, but without warning there was a flutter that made the crowd go stiff-back. Before everyone's eyes the plumes quivered and the wings arched behind the torso to show off the marvelous embroidery of red at the tips of its bays and sickles. The contrast between the colors was so rich and beautiful Sis almost overlooked the fact that the cape rose up past the hackles to end abruptly at the curve where the comb would normally spire. Instead of a beak or eye or wattle there was just a little socket what

looked like the hole you might fall into if you leaned too far over a volcano.

"You're gonna have to forgive ole Mike for being a bit on the sleepy side," the fat man said with a trained chuckle. "You'd find life tiring too if you was him. Just think: he goes around all day wanting nothing more than to cock-a-doodle ... only he's got no noodle!"

Nobody paid attention because all eyes were riveted to the rooster. From under the fluff of hocks appeared the scaly extrusion of spurs and tong-like claws, the toenails seemingly sharp enough to scratch glass. The bird stumbled a dozen awkward steps. Then the man took it by the wing bows, pointed it the opposite direction, and let it stagger back toward where it began. The whole time what was left of the neck lowered and lifted and lowered again, as if Mike didn't know he was no longer equipped to peck.

"Being good farm people you folks no doubt seen a very similar phenomenon with your very own eyes. It's a little appreciated fact, but most members of the animal kingdom don't use but a measly ten percent of their brains. It just so happened than when Mike's original owner went to give him the guillotine, he sheared off the ninety that was lying there unused, leaving just the vital part necessary to remain in this exclusive country club we call the living...."

He poked the rooster in the rear, forcing it to stagger a few more steps.

"Now here's the part of the story that may give you nightmares. The government no

sooner heard Mike's bizarre story than it dispatched a team of scientists to study this riddle of poultry. I don't have to tell you Christians out there that these are perilous times, and we have enemies working all sorts of koo-koo plots to brainwash us in their godless ways of thinking. Now don't tell anybody you heard this from me, but it's not a week that the government iddn't asking to observe Mike. Because the government's got it in its mind that if a chicken can live without a dome, why *cain't* a human? It's well-said, after all, that we humans don't tap into but a mere ten percent of our potentialities either....

"Now you might ask yourself, 'Are my tax dollars really spent by researchers trying to improve the human race by turning us into Marie Antoinettes?' The only thing crazier than a beheading, though, is a reheading. That's right. A reheading, people. Why, these egghead types tell me when they come to study Mike is that he may very well hold the key to learning how to screw a new bulb into an old socket. This is not fiction, my friends. This is not your scary Saturday matinee of mad science run amuck.... You children out there: when you go home tonight you might want to snap a picture of them pretty faces you're sporting at the moment.... Because in a few short years you might well be walking around with *this* tucked between your shoulders...."

He reached under the table and melodramatically jerked something up to his chest. It was a Mason jar of amber-colored liquid. An object twirled in the current of the jar's shaking, making it hard to

tell exactly what the thing was. The crowd seemed to hunch forward en masse. An "ooh!" went up from the children gathered closest to the stage. The object had to settle at the jar's bottom before Sis recognized it as a chicken head.

"Mike don't look too well," Little Pruitt said. The crowd was so busy staring at the decapitated beak it didn't notice the rooster itself had dropped to its fluff, trembling. Not even the fat man noticed.

"Now I'd be delighted as a sultan in a sandbox to entertain any questions you might have," he told the crowd. "Let me explain how headlessness don't have to preclude happiness." Someone wondered how Mike could eat. "I'm glad you asked! Because I'd almost forgot it's dinnertime, iddn't it?.... Anybody under the age of ten know what a headless chicken might possibly eat? Obviously, he can't chew. Don't tell me egg yolk now! We're in mixed company, and us Christians, we don't condone cannibalism...."

As he spoke the man withdrew a little vial from his pocket. He unscrewed the cap, which was attached to an eye dropper, and proceeded to squeeze dribblets down the hole above Mike's hackles. He told the crowd the rooster lived off a diet of cod liver oil and small corn kernels. "Oh, and grit—lotsa grit for the gizzard." The bird continued to tremble. Another youngster asked whether Mike could crow. People laughed. "Outta what?" somebody shouted. "He's got no bullhorn!" The fat man threw up his palms. "No, no... now wait a minute ... that's

not as silly a question as it sounds. The fact is my friend here might not have the stuff to wake you up at the crack'er dawn, but it doesn't mean he won't *try*. He's still got his instincts, folks. A cock gotta crow. That's God's law. Mike here tries his mightiest, but to our ears he sounds like he's gargling—like he's got a mouthful of Listerine!"

"Ask why he's black not white no more," Sis whispered to Little Pruitt. Like most of the children in the tent, Little Pruitt waved his hand in the air trying to catch the fat man's attention. The same voice that shouted out about the bullhorn spoke up again. "Crowin'ain't the only need a rooster's got! What about his other instincts?" Some of the adults laughed, but most of the children looked at each other, uncomprehending.

"Now I knew I was in the great state of Indiana ... only sixty miles from that bastion of education, the great Indiana University ... but I had no clue Dr. Kinsey would come back from the dead to join us tonight!" The crowd laughed. "The truth is," the man continued, "Mike wasn't but four months when his comb was permanently divorced from his cape, thereby stunting his maturity when it comes to the development of those desires that'll make a handsome chanticleer such as him the Tony Curtis of the coop...."

For the first time he seemed to notice the rooster's trembling. The fat man stroked its saddle, almost lovingly it seemed. He looked at it oddly, too, a mixture of anger and melancholy. Then he scooped the bird in his palm and stuck him back in his cage about as gingerly as dropping a coal in a

glowing fire.

"Well, folks, that's our show for tonight. My boon companion and I will be back tomorrow. Tell your friends and family and even your preachers and taxmen and bankers if you will—Nobody ought'a miss the spectacle of the miracle that is the legendary Mike the Headless Chicken!"

He threw the apron back over the cage and then twirled his finger furiously while glaring hard to the back of the tent. Mike's theme song suddenly burst through the P.A. again. As the man ducked through the back flap of the big-top, a grumble of discontent rose from the crowd. Sis and Little Pruitt looked at each other. They didn't know what they expected, but they expected more. Apparently, so did everyone else. "I could'a taped a quarter to a rocket and got a better return on my money," an old-timer behind them spat.

"What do you want to do?" Little Pruitt asked as the crowd around them began filing out. Sis didn't have an idea until she caught somebody's eye. "Come on," she told the boy.

She wasn't sure she could catch the person she saw because the line they had to squeeze into wasn't moving much faster than a beetle would. Once outside, though, she saw a familiar dress pattern loitering a few yards from the many food stands selling hot dogs and corn fritters. Little Pruitt thought Sis was marching for a hamburger. He couldn't believe she was still hungry, but he followed anyway.

"Didn't take much for your ma's stomach to sit better," Sis told Bobbie Kissling. A few feet away, Bobbie's parents were so

caught up trying to decide which was less likely to dislodge a filling—caramel corn or caramel apples—that they didn't notice Sis.

"It wasn't me lying," Bobbie whispered helplessly. "I can still be your friend in school. They won't know no better." She was so nervous that with every other word she'd glance toward her folks, and her words inadvertently came out of the same side of her face as she was peeking from.

Sis tried her best to be hard and mean, but her sense of injury was no match for her pity. She didn't like it, but she couldn't help it: she felt sad for her friend. She wouldn't want to be Bobbie or be in Bobbie's family, not for nothing. It was that simple.

"My pa says Mike was dying," Bobbie blurted. "That's why he was acting so funny. Pa says that's why the show was so short. If it'd gone on, Mike would'a keeled over right in front of our eyes."

"That would'a been worth a quarter," Little Pruitt decided.

Sis disagreed. "Mike wasn't nowhere near dead. He's been around eleven years. He's older than us."

Being challenged made Bobbie bow up a bit. Almost immediately her shoulders went slack, though. Sis knew why: Bobbie was feeling sorry for her. *Save it for yourself*, Sis wanted to say, but she didn't. The other girl looked back one final time at her parents, who were still disagreeing over treats. "You better go," she whispered. "We can talk at school."

Sis spun on her heel and marched off. She could feel her blood pump with her pace. A few

Sundays back at church the preacher was warning folks of all the wrong ways to pray and he recited some verses from a parable that Sis'd subsequently had to memorize in Scripture study: *The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this publican."* She had no idea what half those words meant but she didn't like the point of the lesson which was that conceit was sinful. Seemed to her that being proud was what you had left when the world let it be known you embarrassed it.

"Where are you going?" Little Pruitt asked, hustling to keep up.

"I want to see for myself that Mike ain't dead."

She led him past the tent where the barker was extolling a semi-circle of nervous men to attend the next attraction: *Red-hot sizzlin' and snappy ... Yes, sirs, to see beauties of this magnitude anywhere else would cost you a lot more than a quarter.... You'd have to book passage on a boat to Amazonia.... For that's what these girls are, hootchy kootchy warriors straight from Scythia and Sarmatia ... only for your protection they're equipped with fans of feathers instead of swords and shields ...*

The men were too busy muttering to each other to notice two children go by. Sis made sure to step wide of the stakes and ropes that strung the big-top up, but Little Pruitt insisted on hopping them, one at a time. On the far side of the canvas mountain several trucks and trailers irregularly lined a dirt lot, every single one as lacquered in

chaff as a hauler straight out of the grain elevator. Girls in what looked like swimsuits with peacock tails stood in small groups primping in handheld mirrors and drinking out of Dixie-cups. Three mares tied to a nearby hitching post overlooked a small makeshift pen of Shetland ponies. The big horses munched oats from feedbags strapped behind their ears while their tails switched at a circling swarm of flies thick enough to hang like a thundercloud. Without warning one tail went stiffer and taller than the rest, and the animal attached to it defecated on a skimpy bed of straw already littered with coarse black droppings. Little Pruitt giggled, but Sis didn't allow herself the distraction. She scrutinized the rows of trucks. "I say that one," she guessed, pointing.

"I reckon," Little Pruitt agreed.

The guessing wasn't too hard. This particular truck had a chicken perched atop it. The fiberglass sculpture was big enough that its beak hung halfway over the cab and its sickles came to a point like a portico over the hatch. The whole half from the driver's door back to the tailgate was painted to look as if it was one big wing swathed in curly feathers.

Sis and Little Pruitt passed the pooping horse and slipped into the lot by squeezing through the log fence at its side. She didn't think of herself as sneaking; she was just a little scared of the women with their plumes undulating in the dry breeze, and she didn't wish to speak to anyone. Little Pruitt didn't seem to appreciate her desire to remain invisible. "There's the Hokey-

Pokey Man," he said in a voice loud enough to be overheard.

Yards away a dark figure was visible only for the strides it took him to walk between the vehicles. Sis turned left so their path ran parallel instead of perpendicular to his. Maybe she should've turned right. As they stepped alongside a turquoise cargo truck with shelves for sides stocked full of Dr. Pepper bottles, a pygmy stopped them. "No drink free!" the man shouted through teeth as yellow as his skin. "No steal!" To protect the drinks, he threw out his arms at his shoulders. Even then, his wingspan wasn't wide enough to cover but a handful of bottles. "Move! Leave! Go!" He sounded as if he wasn't sure what word was right for the situation. If Sis and Little Pruitt had wanted a pop, they could've reached over him to grab one. That's how short the pygmy was.

They didn't want a Dr. Pepper, though, so they left the little man zealously guarding the bottles. "Chinamen're always that short," Little Pruitt insisted a few paces on, but Sis didn't answer. She was watching the Hokey-Pokey Man, who was still a few rows away from the chicken truck because he kept stopping to try to sell his candy to the hootchy kootchers. Then she was close enough to make out the script on the door panels of Mike's truck, and she was confused. They went around the side of the fiberglass chicken to the back, where the fat man was stuffing tools into the camper shell that opened under the big sickles. When the man saw the children, he immediately swung the hatch closed.

"You make it a habit to

startle an honest man?"

Sis had her own question. "How's come you got CHICKEN DINNER painted to your truck?"

"That's what brought you back here sneaking through this offal of humanity?" The man grinned and slapped the tailgate. "I had me a beaut of a silver Chevy my boon companion and I would travel about in, but her engine froze up last month Minnesota-ways. Fortunately, I happened upon this old wagon wheel. The fellow who owned it couldn't make a go of his restaurant, so I bought her off him. On the spot. I just ain't had the time to paint her. Mike don't seem to mind. Of course, he ain't got the ocular abilities to realize he's being squired about in a chicken hearse."

"Is Mike okay?" Little Pruitt went. "He didn't look too good. He looked sick."

The man's smile tightened. "What are you? A chicken doctor? Mike's old by bird standards. He's got the palsy. It happens to the best of us. You'll get to shakin' some day yourself."

"How's come his feathers are black when they once was white?"

The words came so fast out of Sis's mouth she almost didn't realize she was the one saying them.

"Who says Mike used to be white?"

Sis looked to Little Pruitt, expecting him to explain. He didn't, so she had to.

"He saw an old picture of Mike in a magazine, and in it Mike was white."

"You sure that was Mike, are you? Maybe it was picturin' a different bird."

"He didn't have him no

head," Little Pruitt insisted. "That's a pretty good clue to who he was."

"Well, maybe it was Mike and maybe it wasn't. What magazine you say it was? Ah, never mind—it don't matter a teat." The man squatted so his rutabaga nose was eye-level with Sis and Little Pruitt. "Here's the thing about chickens, though. Roosters and hens alike. You may not know this because it's rare for one to enjoy as extended a senescence as my boon companion has. But your fowls, once they get past a certain age, their feathers turn black. It's not unlike what happens to humans, only in reverse. Your folks probably got 'em some silver strands cropping their domes, don't they? Well, if they were a rooster and a hen raising you, you'd be worrying their hair black instead'a gray."

After a few seconds of being regarded doubtfully by the two children, the fat man stood.

"You two ought'a scat. You never read *The Wizard of Oz*? Peeking behind curtains ain't ever pretty. You end up regretting what in life you've learn."

He snatched up a bucket that lay overturned at his feet. Underneath it was a little pile of what looked like molted fluff. Sis turned to walk off, but she couldn't take more than two steps because the Hokey-Pokey Man blocked the row. "It's true," he nodded enthusiastically. "What the gentleman says is the God's honest. Only it happens to people, too. I'm living proof. I used to be white as crème." He giggled from deep in his ribs and then stepped aside.

As they walked away Sis wasn't thinking of the Hokey-Pokey Man. The mound of fluff

was what preoccupied her. She was reminded of all the similar piles she'd seen from her mother's dressing station, the one Sis was only ever allowed her near after the butchering was done. By then the table and knives were boiled clean and there weren't even the traces of blood spatter that she'd seen on other folks' farms. That was how protective her mother was: the only evidence of what had gone on were those tossed heaps of feathers, still soppy wet from the scalding pot. Dorothy always dumped them in the same spot, too—behind the barn in a discrete corner where the cow pen narrowed to a chute to lead the Gurnseys inside one by one to have their teatcups fitted on. On other folks' land, fluff was discarded in the front yard, just tossed there where it dried up to blow away like the seed balls of dandelions.

That image had Sis so beguiled she didn't realize that the row she'd led them into was chockablock with hootchy-kootchy girls. Little Pruitt was more than aware of their presence, however. The dancers were scary. Up close their faces were the color of pancakes from all the makeup they wore. Their eyelids were dotted with glitter, and their lashes stuck out as far and sharp as thistles. The boy found it hard not to stare at the diamond cutaway in the stomachs of their outfits, which showed off the mysterious craters of their bellybuttons.

"You two," one of girls huffed when she saw the children. "Git!"

The hostility in the word shook Sis from her thinking. It wouldn't take more than a few steps before somebody nabbed

them and she and Little Pruitt would both get a chewing. Sis didn't want that, so she cut out of the row, climbing over a wagon hitch to get away. Only there were girls in this row, too. And not just them but men as well. They were all gathered together in front of a Serro Scotty trailer what looked like a canned ham. Sis recognized right away the men weren't midway workers. They were dressed too nattily, and no one was sweating. They all seemed to be either lighting smokes for the girls or pouring things in their Dixie cups. As they passed by, the door to the Scotty opened, and a girl poked her head out. "Who's got a story to tell?" she called out. "Baby needs a fresh story. Nothing about haircuts, for Christ's sake. Baby needs a *fresh* story." Several men raised their hands and she chose one. As she pushed the door open wider so he could squeeze inside, Sis could see a sink next to a little table that Sis knew folded down into a bed—she'd slept in a trailer just like this one once. Behind the table was a built-in pew, where some other girl sat on some other man's lap, her peacock feathers obscuring his profile. "Goddamn," the first hootchy kootch said, noticing Sis and Little Pruitt. "Every time I turn around we got more midgets working this stinker gig."

The woman laughed at her own cleverness and then looked offended when nobody else joined in. As she went to slam the trailer door shut her shoulder dipped low enough that Sis could spot fully the face of the man on the trailer pew with the girl on his lap.

It was her notgrandpa, Horace.

*(To Be Continued)*

# ***For the Fighting Spirit of the Walnut* by Takashi Hiraide** **translated by Sawako Nakayasu**

Review by **Steve Halle**

New Directions, 2008, 144 pages  
ISBN 978-0-8112-1748-4

In 1982, Japanese poet Takashi Hiraide penned the poem of the contemporary avant-garde poetic moment, *For the Fighting Spirit of the Walnut*. In 2008, Sawako Nakayasu, thankfully, translated it, in its entirety, into English. This long poem includes lyricism, narrative, science, indeterminacy, and cross-cultural relation. As another soul who, for a time, “fastened my days” to Chicago’s El trains, especially the Purple, Red and Blue lines, the opening lines of the one-hundred-eleven segment long prose poem immediately captured my attention:

**The radiant subway. The wall that clears up, endless. A thundering prayer of steel that fastens together the days, a brush of cloud hanging upon it, O beginning, it is there—your nest.**

The oppressive wind and noise of say, the Jackson Street subway station, immediately took over my mind’s eye. Three minds (author, translator, reader) linked up in a moment through the experience of the text, and I became severely invested in this long poem and its fragments because they are simultaneously familiar and strange, simple and decidedly intricate.

Hiraide infuses minute particulars into the text, and an example is part two of the poem, which I interpret as having an imagistic connection to what I think of as traditional, formal Japanese poetry:

**The sound of the bursting flesh of fruit scatters between your ears. The forefront of this spray beckons those outside of sorrow.**

But then again, no. This is strange, surprising lyricism. Have I heard this sound of bursting fruit? I’m not sure. If the poem has characters, inhabitants (and I think it does) it is these small things: “a back alley that murmurs condolences,” “The spider is genius,” “small white explosions [...] here and there. They are the sounds of our joints popping,” “The soap that transforms in the hand of silence into a living thing,” and “a hanging drop of thunderstorm!” These are Hiraide’s familiar strangenesses—the invitations that invite me back again and again to this poem-world I re-recognize for the first time. These

minutiae, heavily informed by Hiraide's interest in science and in the micro cosmos, make links within this heavily fragmented poem, almost as much as the juxtaposition of images and themes like rain and sun ("pounded by sunshowers"), light and dark ("you've tired yourself out confirming the balance between the fading halo and the boiling light"), living and dying ("the force of crystallization into the force of destruction, and the force of destruction into the clatter of what is destroyed, are now struck back into the course of the swirl I've just lived through"), interior and exterior ("We are all unexploded shells, wrapped around an inner field of nettles").

Like the best avant-garde works, Hiraide's poem is also a poetics, revealing the theory of its own making even as it is being read. For example, part ninety nine offers a description of what the poem is doing and how to read it:

**A train whose one hundred and eleven cars each simultaneously break into the lead past the thin hazy air of the midnight sun. Their linking is discretionary. A train whose one hundred and eleven cars each trail the withered scenery behind their backs. Dissection is voluntary. Upon what kind of track would such a train run, O train, lease this illusory space, and graph it.**

To treat this poem in total or to deconstruct its fragments is superfluous to its enjoyment. No fragment, or "car," exceeds another in importance, only their intersections, the graph of the enclosure in the moment of reading, is important.

Furthermore, this excerpt from part 33, links poem and poet:

**I refracture my own self trembling from the rhythm I subjugate. Afterward I re-regulate, with the last of my one hundred and eleven deceptive cadences, the suppression the interruption the dismantling the fracturing. Why? I, too, am a scrap of strength. Because I am merely the authority of matter. Other scraps will touch upon this too, I imagine.**

I highlight this particular passage not only because it again obviously self-references the poem ("one hundred and eleven deceptive cadences") but also it is a wonder of translation, capturing the playfulness and wordplay translator Nakayasu mentions in her relation of Hiraide's Japanese title:

**To unpack the original Japanese title: "fighting spirit" and "walnut" both have double meanings. Kurumi, the Japanese word for "walnut," is homophonous with kurumi, meaning "wrapping" or "enclosure." Sen'i, meaning "fighting spirit," is also homophonous to sen'i, meaning "fiber." Thus, embedded in the title: "fibers of the walnut," "fibers of the wrapping," and the "fighting spirit of the enclosure."**

Beyond Nakayasu's own admission of translational impediments in the

preface, calling herself a “mystified translator” upon contacting Hiraide for advice, I had fears about what else, besides the title, might be untranslatable in this poetry that is so hyper-aware of language’s phonetic and lexical ambiguities. Yet where the homophonous meanings are lost, such as in the title, perhaps, Nakayasu is able to add richness in other places. In the passage above for example, Hiraide writes about the experience of making a fragmented poem, metonymically revealing the fracturing of poet with the fracturing of the line, the poem’s “cadences.” The two key words of the passage, the a-ha words that extend the meaning, are “scrap” and “matter.”

These words include different definitions. “Scrap” is not only a fragment, an excerpt or a leftover but also a fight or quarrel. “Matter” is what a thing is made of, the subject of discussion, the body of heroic stories, an important affair, and, as intransitive verb, to be of importance. Nakayasu’s translation incorporates all these definitions, making Hiraide the non-totalizing totalizer, relationally engaged in an international poetic “scrap” over meaning making, over what is important. Hiraide recognizes *For the Fighting Spirit of the Walnut* as engaging this theme of fragmentation, segmentation, fracturing, understanding that many segments the work occupy a place in the conversation of indeterminate-yet-particular poetics.

Aside from the work itself, New Directions and book designer Eileen Baumgartner created an excellent bilingual rendering of *For the Fighting Spirit of the Walnut*. The segments of the poem are placed two per page, more often than not, which allows each one adequate space while still connecting the fragments, which is in keeping with Hiraide’s mission of the fractured sequence. The book also functions as a mirror, beginning with the rising sequence of the English translation followed by an inverted image of lightning on facing pages, leading to the descending sequence of the original Japanese version. This mirroring certainly echoes the rising and descending feelings of riding the subway, where Hiraide wrote many of these segments.

This juxtaposed feeling, which I felt on Chicago’s CTA trains, of descending into the gloomy tunnels only to emerge into light, especially on a bright day, defied description until I read the exact concatenation of thought and emotion in Takashi Hiraide’s *For the Fighting Spirit of the Walnut*, “The window was always a mirror that gazed out onto a small graveyard.” My experience of riding Chicago’s CTA trains is doubled just like that image—looking through the reflection of a self’s possibility into death. Subterranean, I can see myself reflected in the window against the pitch black background of the tunnel, which is disconcerting at times. This, contrasted with emerging into the sunlight, “fastens together the days” of humans who as William Butler Yeats notes in “Sailing to Byzantium” are both “sick with desire” and “fastened to a dying animal.” Hiraide’s poem becomes the poem of the moment by letting us know we are in both places, in the darkness and light, simultaneously, which can be a difficult lesson to accept. This review is ultimately a failure to encapsulate a work and a translation that, as Sir Philip Sidney intones in *A Defense of Poesy*, has taught and delighted me so well. It will continue to do so.

Alyssa Monks is shown in profile, looking towards the left. She has long, dark hair and is wearing sunglasses on her head. The background is a blurred cityscape with tall buildings.

# Alyssa Monks

[alyssamonks.com](http://alyssamonks.com)

*“Over the years my paintings have become more and more about inhabiting a woman’s body. Through the use of filters—shower curtains, water, Vaseline, and glass—I have been able to distort the figure, and create a tension between the realism and the disintegration of form. The painting is constantly referring to the surface itself, as a window into another world which is looking out at the viewer.”*

**M**ONKS'S work explores narrative figuration. She strives for a naturalism of illusion that exceeds that of photographic documentation, and rather explores the visceral, pulsating vibrations of color that can make a painted body seem to have blood pumping through it. Monks explores the possibilities of creating space within a shallow depth and pushing the image into real space. Using delicate color relationships, she creates a narrative, not only in the composition, but in the actual surface as well. Her sensibility of paint and color allows one to be seduced into the illusion of each image. The result of this pushing and pulling of naturalism is a confrontation of the delicate balance between mortality and vitality. Striving for anatomical and realistic accuracy, it is her intention to convey an arresting vision that compels the viewer to feel their own humanness. This requires attention to detail and a slow and rich execution. It is Monks's concern to relate visually the contemporary female experience with sensitivity, empathy, and integrity.

Alyssa Monks earned her MFA in painting from the New York Academy of Art, Graduate School of Figurative Art. She additionally studied at Montclair State College, the New School, and Lorenzo de'Medici in Florence. She completed an artist in residency at Fullerton College. She is Continuing Education Faculty at the New York Academy of Art, where she teaches Flesh Painting and teaches Figure Painting at Montclair State University. Alyssa has been awarded a Grant for Painting from the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation three times and has had recent solo shows in New York at DFN Gallery and Anaheim, California at Sarah Bain Gallery, where Alyssa is currently represented by both. In addition, her work is available at Hesper Gallery in San Francisco and David Klein Gallery in Birmingham, Michigan. Monks will participate in two museum shows in 2010 at the Kunst Museum Ahlen in Ahlen, Germany and at the Noyes Museum in Oceanville, New Jersey. She is also planning shows nationwide in the next few years. Her recent New York show will be reviewed in *Art News* in June's issue.

## Q&A

### *How do you feel about formal training?*

I believe that all artists are self-taught to a certain extent. One must learn their materials by using them as much as possible in as many ways as possible and from there, try to do something no one's ever done before. That being said, however, I believe there is a tremendous value in learning from those painters you admire, and sometimes those you don't, as well. As I, always a realist painter, start to explore abstraction as I distort and disintegrate the body, I appreciate all the anatomical and classical training I had. I can deconstruct what I know inside and out. Phillip Pearlstein advised us upon graduation, "unlearn everything you've learned here" in order to make art. There is a progression. For me, without education, one is just painting in isolation, in a box, recycling the same strokes over and over. I am always

trying to experiment and learn more about my medium and the paintings that have come before mine in order to figure out where to go next, whatever that takes.

### *Do you have a ritual you must do first before you place your hand on your creation?*

Before I start to paint, I like to mix out big piles of colors that I'll use. I like to have it ready so I don't have to remix or stretch the color too thin. Once that is ready, I like to lie on my back in my studio on the floor for ten minutes with my eyes closed and try to see the finished painting in my head. Then I'm ready to start.

### *Have any of your mistakes become a success?*

I think that as artists, we learn more

from our mistakes than our successes. I used to think in terms of mistakes, but now I try to exert less control over the finished product. I respect the medium and let it do what it tends to do. I just respond to what happens and keep moving the paint until it feels right. there aren't any "mistakes" if there is no restriction. The way I am painting now I am inventing a lot of steam and drops of water and distortion of the body - so it's very open to the misbehavior of the medium.

***Do you base your work on photo, models, or out of the blue?***

I make over 1000 photographs on average for each image. I work a lot on the photograph and then use it for color reference and a basic composition once I have manipulated it to my satisfaction. Once I get an initial feel of it on the canvas, much of the detail of steam and water are invented. I'm not interested in copying the photo exactly but rather having the immediacy of the paint convey a surface that feels like water on glass. A photo-realist would not have as much surface or brushstroke as i have in my paintings. I like that the surface can ride the line between paint and an illusion, easily breaking down as you get closer and closer.

***What are you conquering next?***

I am going to work more with destroying the illusion in places while creating a hyper-realistic effect in others in the same painting. I am thinking there will be more steam and more paint. We'll see where that takes me. Usually a new element introduces itself to me along the way. Perhaps it will be another filter further separating the body from the viewer.

***What do you listen to when creating?***

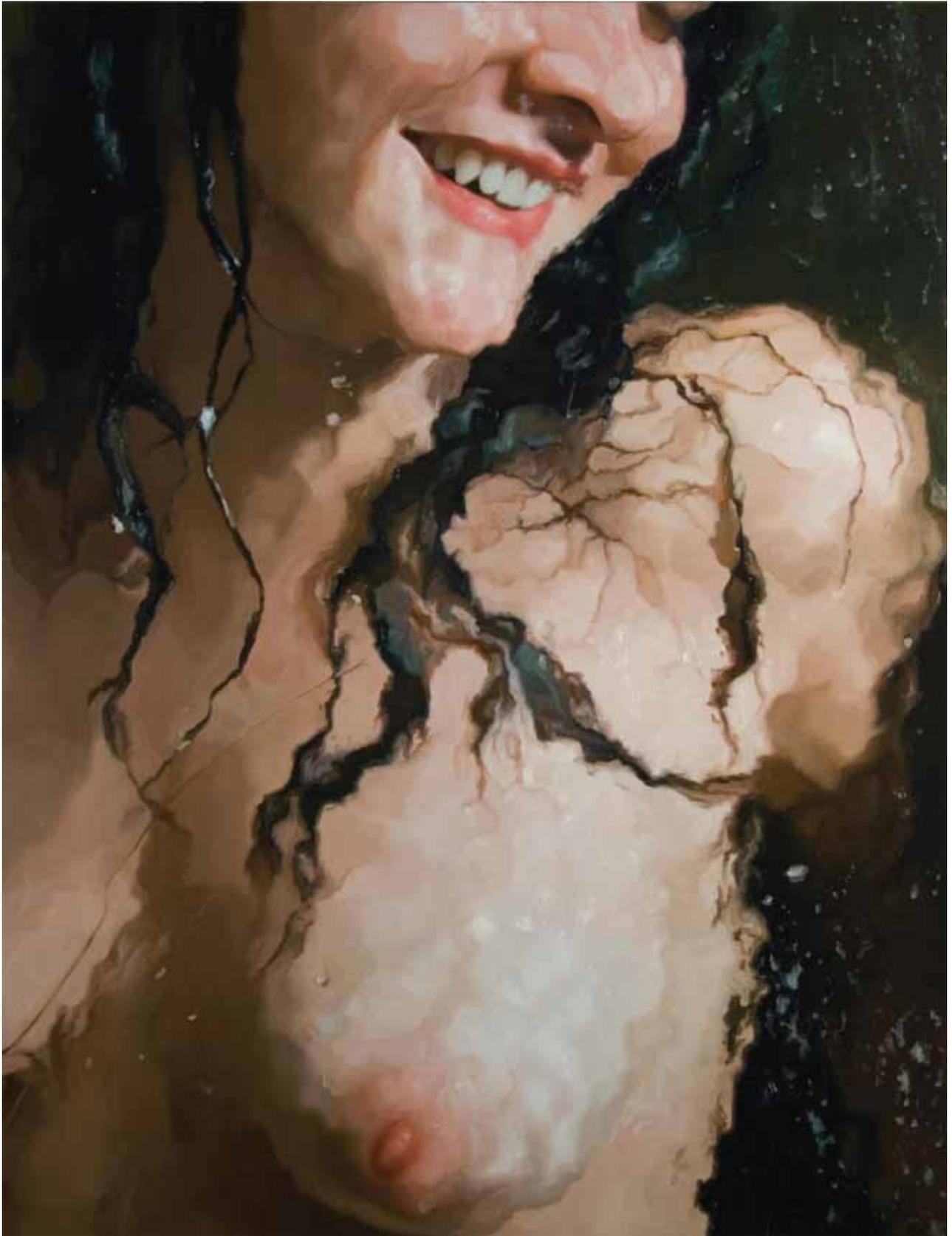
Mostly I listen to NPR, like most artists here in NYC. Sometimes I play archives of "this american life" or "radio lab". At some point I need upbeat, music, often cheesy 80's style, to get me going in the middle of the night at the end of those 14 hour stretches.

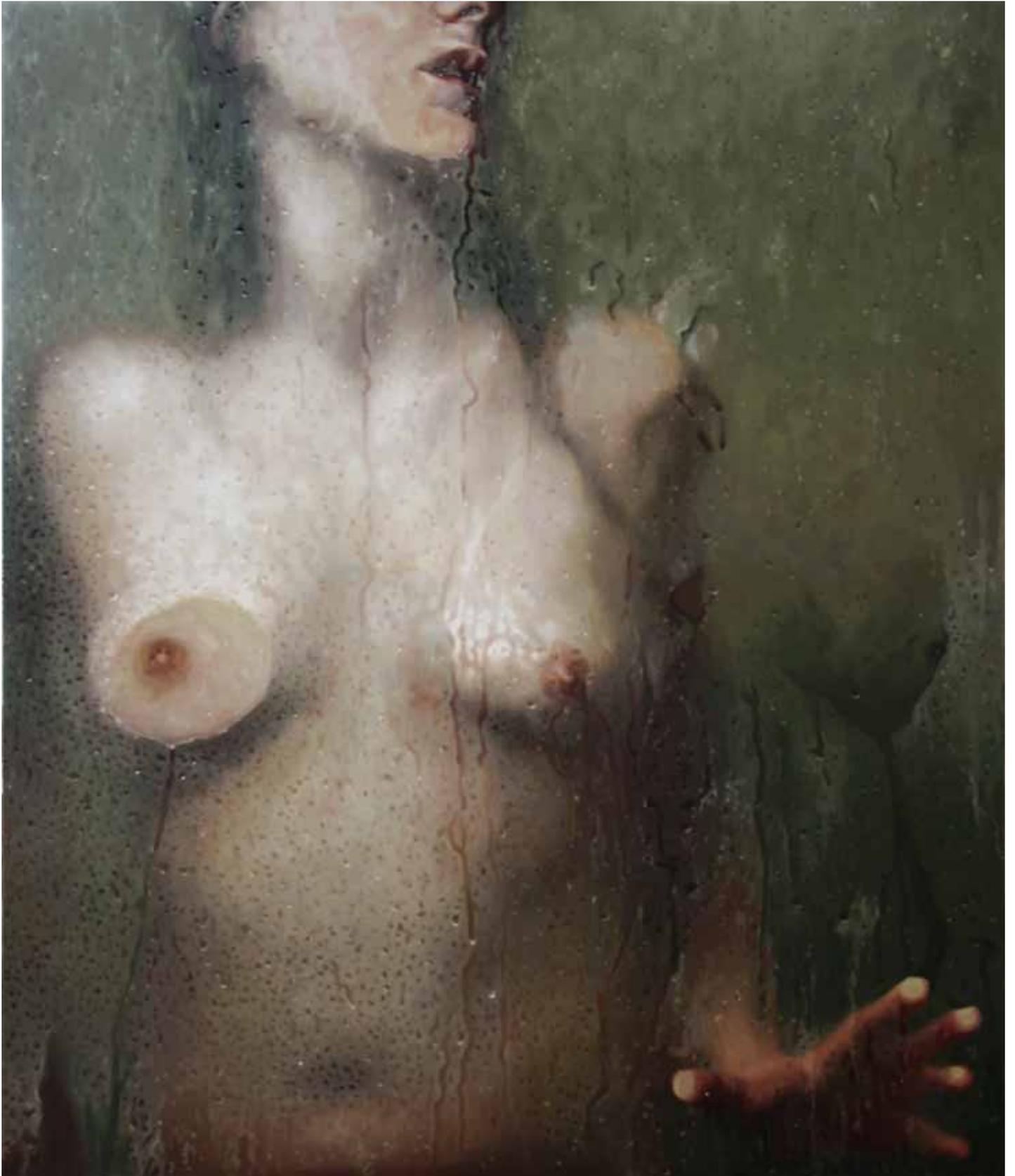
**ALYSSA MONKS**

**Hands**  
oil on linen  
48" x 56"









ALYSSA MONKS

Press oil on linen 50" x 54"

**Smirk**  
oil on linen  
48" x 64"



**ALYSSA MONKS**





ALYSSA MONKS

Profile oil on linen 42" x 28"



ALYSSA MONKS

Fragment oil on linen 53" x 36"





**Steamed**  
oil on linen  
64" x 86"

**ALYSSA MONKS**



ALYSSA MONKS

Mom oil on linen 48" x 34"

# Windows Into A Creative World In Flux

## *Novaless*

### by Nicholas Manning

Review by Grady Harp

**'Among scientists are collectors, classifiers, and compulsive tidiers-up; many are detectives by temperament and many are explorers; some are artists and others artisans. There are poet-scientists and philosopher-scientists and even a few mystics.'**

Sir Peter Brian Medawar, *The Art of the Soluble*

Nicholas Manning's eloquent, fascinating extended poem *Novaless* is a refreshingly unique journey into the infinite possibilities that poetry allows. His previous works have been published in journals around the globe and his artistry as a poet is well grounded. Yet in this publication Manning pushes his own wide boundaries into the world of metaphysics: he is exploring through fragments of phrases and repeated ideas and words a matrix upon which the reader can discover individual meanings and create personal stories from the words as tools Manning provides. He sprinkles his pages of this single poem – each page designated by a Roman numeral as though there were a set progression for the reader to follow – with spaces between words, asterisks, forward and backward indicators from the keyboard, and other elements of construction that encourage the insertion of a larger meaning than the essentially romantic meanderings of his narrative.

Some students of poetry will research the word 'Novaless', hoping to better understand the challenge before them. Such research may uncover 'definitions' of the word as "to be lackluster in performance", "to be impotent either sexually/physically, or sometimes both." Others may heed Manning's own subtly placed small parenthetical subtitle (**elements towards a metaphysic**). Such exercises become futile when the reader opens the mind to the cosmos Nicholas Manning explores in this breathtakingly beautiful work.

**CXXIV.**

originally

a painful swelling

pustule \* for monuments compares  
**windgall** influenced by \* a fall  
as **verb** : <<see how my hands  
as borde by worke ? >>  
what  
sadness there  
is in this \* short life ?  
<< in it I will not  
**abide** >>

### VIII.

the colours  
as in my firmament  
spread by the sky \* lightly ...in  
light : such coldest passions  
this long \* winter born  
the most searing  
press  
the skies a rising future  
oracity : sheer \* opacities  
of calico in blue ...  
<< I need you \*  
here **now**  
beloved >> tinsel roses  
risen \* in the rising tunes's lack  
in the darkest of all blooms  
long silver lake-bridges  
tension's spectral  
shares  
shaping the floating  
face : << what are you without  
me \* mirror ? >> ... in the stillest  
moments : black flowers  
of myself?

Reading Nicholas Manning's symphonic *Novaless* once is not enough: reading each cluster of words, each line – once – is not enough. It is only when the reader steps into his nebulous space of intellectual and spiritual possibilities that the beauty of this single poem/story/thought/need/joy/pain can be embraced for the magical work that it is. This is the Medawar world of the poet-scientist and the philosopher-scientist, but more important - this is the world of a creative artist exploring the possibilities from the peak of the mountaintop.

# The Fragility of the Soul: Insights from PIA STERN

Art Review by **Grady Harp**



PHOTO OF ARTIST AT WORK

We work in the dark  
We do what we can  
We give what we have  
Our doubt is our passion and  
Our passion is our task  
The rest is the madness of art.

— *Henry James*

**P**IA STERN makes art and in doing so she explores the mysteries of existence, not by painting images as though channeled from a universal source, but rather by approaching a canvas or paper, languishing in the multiple layers of rich color she brushes into existence, until a flicker of an idea in the space she has created allows her to mine the ideas that are at once universal and personal.

Stern has always straddled that line between abstraction and representation, finding a language of her own that allows her to open portals of exploration for those who stand before her

finished works. Her paintings range from large canvases to small works on paper, but no matter the size of the confined resulting statement, the messages range from contemplative and spiritual to flashes of whimsy and childlike glee. Painting for Pia Stern is a confrontation with personal dialogues: conversations that emerge from her canvases reflect a woman fascinated with the power of nature and the vastness of the universe, the interplay of light and dark, and the searching for the role of man in the enormity of it all.

Across the lushly colorful surfaces Stern creates are scraffito-like images that seem to



**VOL DE NUIT**

defined fishes and nebulous circles, and near human like figures – gather in the band of earthbound dark surrounded above and below by a mysterious light source.

In some of her more representational works such as **Portal**, the artist allows the viewer to decide which of the elements drawn – the bed, the door, the window, or the central position of the proscenium square – represents the entry/exit of the outlined human figure. In **Rondo for Galileo** she shares a vision of the celestial bodies of the universe in a dance-like aggregation. And returning to earthly delights **In the**

**PORTAL**



**THE LAST REMAINING PIECES**

emerge from the divisions of dark and light, water and air, the known and the unknown. In **Vol de Nuit** a moon cloud hovers over a ghostly terrain: a bicycle suggests the transportive means of the title's night flight. In **The Last Remaining Pieces** several of Stern's artistic icons appear – the boats that always seem adrift,





**IN THE GARDEN**

**Garden** gathers all the elements of Stern's homage to the mystery of life and beauty.

If all of Stern's successful career as an artist and philosopher can be summarized in one painting, that painting would be **The History of Man** – a complex and vast journey through many of the elements that make her work so durable in this ever changing world of art. Careful study of this magnificent painting quietly offers entry into



**RONDO FOR GALILEO**

the complex and gently vulnerable world of Pia Stern, an immensely gifted artist whose influence extends beyond the confines of her unique paintings. Pia Stern is a contemporary shaman.



**HISTORY OF MAN**

# Annie Finch

Annie Finch's books of poems include *Eve*, *Calendars*, *The Encyclopedia of Scotland*, and *Among the Goddesses*. She has also published a number of books of poetics. She directs the Stonecoast MFA low-residency program in creative writing. Annie is a longtime Frank O'Hara fan and happy to be in these eponymous pages.



photo by Richard Beban

## Test Zone

Am I a shadowed child? Doomed to erase  
ancestors, possessions? With a blast  
these hands have made? Shut, shut my door.

Shut my home. My life. Close them fast.  
One live day. One cold desert. One night more.  
From the forgotten forests drives the past:

Lost bodies in the sand, chalk faces, the grace:  
*come tremble here, come out.* The spinning core.  
Too-close languages stare me in the face.

# My Baby Fell Apart

My baby fell apart, and I could see.  
It was a simple vision of surrender.  
There was no baby left inside of me.

I learned something of me when suddenly  
The baby bent, in a way I could not bend her.  
My baby fell apart, and I could see

Her falling through a loud internal sea  
Away from the one place that still kept tender.  
There was no baby left inside of me.

I came apart; I couldn't even be  
There for the loss. I lost my need to mend her  
When my baby fell apart, and I could see

Something of her who fell away from me,  
But nothing to make me ever need to tend her.  
There was no baby left inside of me.

I had no baby. I could only see  
The need to be apart from her, to end her.  
My baby fell apart—and I could see.  
There was no baby left inside of me.

## Unreasonable Vaults:

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# Connie Voisine's *Rare High Meadow of Which I Might Dream*

Review by Miguel Murphy

University of Chicago Press, 2008

\$14

The hidden contemplation of Connie Voisine's second book of poetry, *Rare High Meadow of Which I Might Dream*, is the work of 12th century poetess Marie de France. Though her true identity remains unknown to us, her poems of medieval desire recount the difficult triangulations of lovers caught between fidelity and uncontrollable passion, love and ruin. Voisine's collection meditates the dangerous proximities of human desire in contemporary settings, traveling by plane, watching the murders of nightly news stories, reading novels, or remembering liberating college years, and still reminds us that our failed loves are the source of the very difficult pleasures of spiritual drives.

The book's two major symbols are the bird and the plane, and the book itself is organized like two opening wings that repeat these important totems. The image of a crashed plane in the opening poem, "The Early Days of Aviation", is repeated by a later poem in which a speaker travels by a plane "the pilot will land with only one engine". In "The Invisible Man remained", at the book's beginning, a monologue in which his wife "wants // a clean, pure widowhood" instead of "the weight / of him at night in their bed and her own twisted body / against vacant space" is mirrored at the end of the book in a poem of two lovers waking together to the sound of mortal doves cooing. And the meditation on the story of Marie de France's poem "Laustic", or "Nightingale", Voisine's "The Bird is Her Reason", imagines "the grief /of the un-lived life", and the lines "I think the bird is / her lover, conceived // as we conceive the one we love" are repeated in the image of the bird-as-man-lover of the later poem, "The Bitter After":

Once a man gave up flight.

Before he even knew her, he named her  
*Porcelain Cup,*  
*Keyhole,* called her shadow  
*Dark One,*  
and *Lunar Thirst I Have Found.*

Voisine's readers will find that flight is the great risk of these poems, as the speaker ultimately leaps into "the infinity of living between" love and love's mortal burden, loss. What we face in this book is that inevitable distance we cannot help but try to cross. The departed body, where love's leap is our burden.

At times, the motif of fallen desire—of relevant bird, air, distance, love and destruction—is technological ("a plane . . . the eventual / crumpled metal in a farmer's field"), natural ("like the ache // of miles of desert, the beaten / armor of mountain"), erotic ("the bird is / my own body, glove-colored, a wild, / open throat"), fablesque, but domestic ("He flew through her / narrow window and the great // shadow he cast into her room / poured into her lap and it had / wings"), philosophical ("I'd look up—/ at what? Things beyond / words. Stars / monotone in their beyondness. / Synecdoche without / referent. Smug cold grit."), political ("for some girls, our bodies are not immortal so much as / expendable"), religious ("You say to yourself, *just decide you want / to live—a leap of faith.* . . what cost to the soul is this enduring?"), and always mortal ("that mammal hot in the cry").

Though the confessional narrative is her primary mode, perhaps Voisine's more surprising poems offer us a lyric and fable-like quality. Stylistically, these poems surprise with their topological layout, tiered, broken phrasings, that seem to lace themselves into nettings of breath and strenuous spaces, enhancing that tension of closeness and desire true of her work's thematics. Sturdy and feminine, her speakers relish this space that heightens the perils of "an indistinguishable burning, failing bliss" between bodies. It is "the terrible must" that propels them toward their fate, which is by nature, ours too. "Did god really think we wouldn't" she asks, "step into desire, this bitter / after?"

But if Love is "the difficult realization that something other than oneself is real", as Iris Murdock has written, then Voisine's latest book anchors this difficulty to our mortal peril. In these poems, we fall, spill, descend. That is, we find ourselves undone by coming too close to the

source of our hungers. Indeed, we find in our very nature an instinct that drives us upward toward that Keatsian realm—“all human breathing passion far above / that leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed”—where desire becomes a kind of spiritual torment. We might further contemplate the myth of Icarus in Voisine’s poems, though it is not his fall the poet idolizes, but the beauty of his impossible, inevitably destructive, and fateful desire.

The compelling title to Voisine’s collection might allude to a human quest for knowledge, beauty, art, soul, love, but in her poems we remember that we are blind to the dangers of these hungers. The title comes from a later poem, “The Beginning of Things”, a lyric that wonders that the dovesong two lovers hear one morning may be a kind of bodiless harbinger:

Who are you,  
narrow stranger? *Trust me,*  
you said one night,

swung a heavy stick  
into the hive-shaped tree,  
*they’re in there.*

And the dark bodies  
flew upward  
a hundred in one teeming cloud.

This poem is centered on the conversation between lovers, in which the speaker is bothered by the doves’ cooing, a sound her counterpart dismisses. “*Flesh / is grass*”, she writes, and then questions whether this flesh is the “rare / high meadow of which I // might dream”. All lovers are haunted by mortality and Voisine’s work remembers that in the veil of romanticism, our hearts aspire to possess again, to resurrect, to never have lost the lost beloved. It is an impossible quest, but a human one. It is at the heart of mythic telling. “This is how it happens” she writes later, “passion and its unreasonable vaults of soul”. In her book, Love is a dangerous presence because it threatens us with dark proximities, her speakers’ intuition of cloaked loss, imagined absence. Though loss is immanent, Voisine’s poetry succeeds by recognizing that flesh—for all its failing yearnings—and not heaven, is the heart’s true aspiration.



# Donna Kirk

studied under poet Charles Simic at the University of New Hampshire. Simic introduced her to Billy Collins and, over dinner, a joke between the two ended up in one of his poems. She has interviewed Maxine Kumin for the radio and escorted Donald Hall to a literary festival. Donna is the director of the Seacoast Writers Circle, the publicist of the *Jazzmouth Poetry and Jazz Festival* and was recently published in *Six Sentences, Volume 2*. She lives on a rocky seacoast near a large, isolated forest where she writes daily. She is working on her first split-novel; a fictional account of the non-fictional lives of women in modernity. "Remember Donna, prose is a potato, poetry is a bird." - Billy Collins.

*Part Of A Series Of Vignette Poems Called*  
**The Broken Record  
Player In Pieces**

Scratchy,  
you should hear these records  
all glistening milky rain.  
He beats his head on the trim near the door  
before ducking into the room.  
I stop laughing behind my hand when  
he looks at me, his eyes as serious  
as that moth who has been smashing itself  
into the orange lamp for over an hour.

It was as lively as a lemonade stand  
with children waving at quarters  
like cows with angels in their eyes.  
It was as sexy as apple bobbing another person's tongue.

Anyway, if only you could have seen how all those skirts  
fanned out, giddy, during the last song of the night;  
I am sure together we would have taken pictures  
and stuffed them in a cup.  
Than buried our secret Grail  
in the backyard, under a tall tree,  
laughing like gods  
at the secrets that only we have seen.

# Brooklyn 1842

How deep and beautiful  
The center of a man's chest.

It hums of hair  
and heat  
and a careful romance

which he stores below a bone white fence.

## While Holding Up A Lighter and Reading Aloud on the Passenger Side of an '83 Tercel

A saline gesture  
of comedy. I am a fool.

You laugh and hiccup back the tears.

The sea salt mixing inwardly;  
that endless swirl of irony, the bitter sting of longing, a dash of iodine  
to neutralize the acid, and a fierce laughter to break against the shore.

You point to a young couple holding hands  
near the water.

I rest my lighter on the book no longer reading;  
the folly is broken and hangs forced above us  
like merry ghosts who whisper "shhhh" nodding to one another.

I join them in the rafters and like brave children  
in awe, unaccustomed to holding such heavy bodies of water  
we watch the ocean spill down the crescent of your cheeks;

honest and sad,  
both like half moons wearing the mist of evening.

A photograph of artist Jean-Noël Delettre in his studio. He is a bald man with glasses, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and jeans, looking down at a palette on a table. The studio is filled with art supplies, including paint tubes and brushes. Two large landscape paintings are visible in the background. The text 'Jean-Noël Delettre' is overlaid in large white font, with the website 'www.delettre.org' below it.

# Jean-Noël Delettre

[www.delettre.org](http://www.delettre.org)



*“On my canvas, with high colors, I look for rhythm and create vibrations. My wish is to give life to my paintings, using matter, movements, perfume, light, my idea of freedom and my energy in order to connect myself with the viewer and with the subject.”*

**D**ELETTRE was born in 1971, he has dual nationality (French and Canadian). He grew up in Lyon, France. When he was 15, Delettre understood that his life passion was to be an artist. After studying graphic design in Paris, he worked as a painting restorer of old posters for one year and for five years as a graphic designer for an advertising agency. In 1997, he had a serious road accident and ended up spending one month in a coma from which he was not expected to recover. It took him ten years to learn the basics again - how to walk, speak, think and reconstruct his life - before picking up his brushes again and discovering oil painting.

He has been painting full time since 2006. In 2007 mountains began to play an important role in his career. Thanks to their vastness of scale, the intensity of feeling they provoked, the sensation of immensity, as well as the unity they imposed he has been able to add a more physical expression to his work.

Delettre has just finished a very successful show in the “PONS Gallery” in Lyon, France and numerous collectors and art dealers are waiting for his next exhibition which he is now preparing on the body in motion, bodies in situations which characterize them and which reveal the different people he meets. His work has been published in different French publications as “Artistes Magazine” and he received two awards from the “Société Lyonnaise des Beaux-arts”.

All the above themes evolve from within before being reflected in his work.

## Q&A

### *Which artist/photographer do you admire or has had the biggest influence on your work?*

At the age of fifteen, in front of Turner's ships in flames - my first true artistic revelation - I came to understand the strength of suggestion in paintings and from then on decided to become a painter.

My first academic influences were the paintings and drawings of old masters like Rembrandt, Vermeer, Géricault, Frans Hals, Delacroix, Ingres and many others. Impressionists such as Turner, Whistler, Degas, Renoir, Monet, Manet, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Caillebotte, Gauguin as well as Hopper, Vuillard, Bonnard, Klimt, Schiele, De Stael have all showed me the way towards my artistic journey.

### *How do you feel about formal training?*

I think that formal training is important because it is necessary to have a maximum of technical tools to be able to free oneself from basic constraints. On the other hand, it is not necessary to know all the techniques, but the most important one is to be able to use those tools which will allow you to reveal the artist you really are.

### *How do you bring emotion across to a flat surface?*

The subject and the figure allow me to paint my expression through which I can deliver my most intimate feelings. The composition of lines, colors, intensities, lights and also material enable me to give life and accuracy to my emotions.

### *Do you have a ritual or specific process you follow when creating art?*

When I decide on my subject, I need solitude and, consequently, silence. That is why I like painting late at night. I also need music to forget myself - this helps me to find my rhythm to bring my gestures and my feelings together. I paint so much to get inspired and continue until fatigue makes me stop working.

### *Must there be a statement with each creation?*

I think it is inevitable, but not necessarily using words. The best statement of a viewer for me is when my work evokes a live sensation or a feeling which touches him profoundly. When I see that I touched the viewer's heart, then he can see my work over and over again and always discover a new level of emotions.

JEAN-NOËL DELETTRE

Un Sommet  
oil on canvas  
64" x 51"







JEAN-NOËL DELETTRE

Reflect N°3 oil on canvas 13" x 10"





Sommet dans la lumière oil on canvas 16" x 32"





**Reflect N°1**  
oil on canvas  
13" x 10"

**JEAN-NOËL  
DELETTRE**

# *Spider Vein Impasto*

## Edited and Designed by Juliet Cook for Blood Pudding Press

Review by Grady Harp

*SPIDER VEIN IMPASTO* (Blood Pudding Press) introduces a new edition with this handsomely delicious designed and curated collection of poetry by some of our most interesting new poets. The reasons for the choice of included poets can best be understood by Juliet Cook, a prolific and very fine poet whose penchant for finding strange and bizarre subject matter is evidenced in her own work and seeps into the colorful binding of this collection.

The book is 'bound' by colorful ribbon(s) tied along the spine of a cover bearing the artwork 'Europa' by Dan Ruhmanty, an artist whose fluid, quasi-focused imagery and color-weaving alerts the reader to the pleasures or confections within. Pasted on this cover, front and back, are stickers bearing phrases and images such as 'Baked FRESH", 'SLICED", 'BUTTER" and 'Filled' - each an indicator of Juliet Cook's seductively manic selection of poets and poems. The book has the appearance of a Limited Edition artwork, and it may well become that!

The poets whose works are included are Adam Fieled, Juliet Cook, Andrew Lundwall, Aunia Kahn, Brooklyn Copeland, Candice Rice, Cheryl Townsend, Gina Abelkop, Jenny Sadre-Orafai, John Rocco, Letizia Merello, Melissa Culbertson, Nathan Logan, Nicole Cartwright Denison, Peg Duthie, Sharon Zetter, Susan Slaviero and Suzanne Savikas: each of these fine poets deserves an excerpt in a review but a flavor can be tasted from a few examples.

Melissa Culbertson offers a four-part poem entitled *Christian Bale Stars in a Biopic About My Ex-Boyfriend*, rich with ramblings and fantasies. Letizia Merello is represented by six poems, alternating English with Italian 'songs' that dance with a touch a lurid madness.

Susan Slaviero's *Robosexual* reads:

The unwritten eggs beneath her veil,  
aluminum legbones, a locust husk,  
the embroidery of her threaded tongue.  
I allow for flux, fissure,  
for saints kneeling on upturned spoons.  
This scene is about design.

Later, under girl-cheek moons,  
she drizzles spittle on a man's abdomen.

The poppies on her helmet disguise  
starlike dents, a row of rivets. Wake up  
and bend in unexpected ways.  
A needle is warmed in the glimmer  
of a kitchen match. You might be lulled  
by the cut of her jaw, the unwinding  
of her limbs. You might be hooked  
on rubber dolls. You might be licking  
your own reflection.'

Adam Fieled offers the following jewel  
*Gun and Knife* (after J. Tranter)

“Please, I’m begging you –  
don’t do it at 3 a.m., when  
I’m sleeping, but rather at  
high noon, in a public square,  
so that everyone can see a  
thousand rosy rivulets run  
like waterfalls away from  
my innards. A sawed-off  
shotgun, please, fed to me  
like cornbread, what I know  
is really best, no need for  
a spoon, just shove it in.  
Then, when my brain dots  
& streaks several unready  
awnings, the knife, have it  
be long, terrible as angels  
dancing & as merciless,  
plunge it deeper, deeper,  
so that I feel my aorta  
being severed, really feel  
it, how shockingly irrevocable,  
just like that, so that literal  
nothingness becomes my  
only reality, which it already  
is, which is why I’m begging  
you, please, please.”

This kaleidoscopic collection is filled with excellent work such as these two poems suggest. It is refreshing to observe the rise of the chapbook not only filling the need for continued printed publication of fresh new work, but taking the love and attention of editors such as Juliet Cook to present solid poetry in such a colorful and creative edition.



# Barbra Nightingale

## Being the Girl

My father hated cats  
so of course I wanted one;  
found a kitten once,  
alone by the side of a road,  
hid it in our garage  
where my mother fed it  
all night, lest its crying,  
wake my dad, fearful  
he would wring its neck.  
Next day, The Humane Society  
took it away.  
Or so I remember.

My father hated boys, too,  
(not in general, just around me)  
so of course I had to have  
not just one, but an endless  
parade of them, starting  
with the boy next door  
and stretching from there to Timbuktu  
(Dad's favorite faraway place).

Dad never understood  
the hunger in my bones,  
how they grew hollow and aching at night  
for things I could not have,  
like curly hair and bright, blue eyes.  
He never understood  
how bartering away my flesh  
(a dollar for every lost pound)  
made me give it more freely;  
gold rings and diamonds  
gathered in my drawer.

Barbra Nightingale's poems have appeared in over 200 journals and anthologies such as *Tigertail: A Florida Anthology*, and *Best of Tigertail*, *Barrow Street*, *The Georgetown Review*, *The Eloquent Athiest*, *Lit Crit Journal*, *Chatahoochee Review*, *Kalliope*, *Calyx*, and many others, including previous issues of *MiPo* and *Ocho*. She also appeared in the online chapbook series, with *The Ex-Files*. She has published six books of poetry, most recently *Geometry of Dreams*, due to appear in June, 2009 from Word Tech Editions.

My brothers, being boys  
had only to grow into men,  
their voices deep as cut glass,  
their fingers calloused from work.  
I look at them now and see  
how transparent they've become,  
rubbed through by time,  
more than a little abuse.

What was it I feared  
in the fall of a step,  
a poke in the rib?  
With what awe did I listen  
to the sound of rain and thunder  
off in the distance,  
like an argument lost  
amid overgrown lawns?

My father died in silence,  
so much silence it echoed  
against the frail walls of his heart.  
He never understood how we heard it,  
always heard it, hear it still: tha thump!  
tha thump! tha thump!

[www.poetsandartists.com](http://www.poetsandartists.com)



*Laughing Girl* by Alyssa Monks