

When HVCCA opened in 2004, it had a broad vision to support contemporary artists and to offer insight into challenging new works and new media. That same year we also showcased emerging artists from the performance, installation and technology arenas through our first Peekskill Project, placing art along public roads, in Parks and in abandoned buildings throughout the city of Peekskill. We hosted our first Art-in-Residency to Sandra Tomboloni of Florence, celebrating her creativity in a closing solo exhibition.

In 2007, 11 years ago, Mara Mills came to me with the suggestion to invite poets and artists of the spoken word to offer original works that would intersect with the art works presented in the exhibitions, to model varied ways for people to relate to contemporary art, to offer the freedom of personal expression through viewing and absorbing the arts in a new and unique way. Since then 11 iterations of Writing the Walls have taken place at HVCCA, with excited participants passing from art work to art work, following the paths of the writers as they read and perform their works in front of their inspiring piece.

Our appreciation goes to Mara Mills, our talented Deputy Director and mentor in the Theatre Arts, who, each year, has breathed life into this project and who deftly, guides the poets and playwrights in their readings and performances, and to JoAnn Brody who worked tirelessly to mount the works near their respective art and who made this book a reality.

Livia Selmanowitz Straus, PhD

Executive Director, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art

Writing the Walls

The exhibition was called XXLarge and the works on the walls of The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art were indeed enormous; large enough to be stage sets. I had just closed the Herbert Mark Newman Theater after 13 years of being the Artistic Director. My focus at the theater had been producing and directing original work and contemporary theater with a social justice message. Coming at this transitional time in my career to HVCCA proved to be a true turning point, a chance to focus on original work based on phenomenal art, to cross genres between the literary/dramatic and visual art. My two life passions. But at that moment looking at the art, it was just an idea that I took up with Livia Straus. The mission of HVCCA was to present exhibitions of emerging and established Contemporary artists and to provide a place for learning and discussion of art which, unlike art with a pedigree, allowed the viewer to have a relationship with the work in which the viewer was an active participant. What better place to open the doors to poets and playwrights to engage in a dialogue with the work and produce poems and plays that were illuminated by and illuminated the work on the walls.

Livia agreed and our partnership and Writing the Walls was born and we now are celebrating our 11th year of Writing the Walls. During this time, we have presented plays, several of which ended up at Manhattan Repertory Theater in NYC while others have travelled, and poems hung with the work and read during our yearly curated "Poets' Walk". We have gone from 10 participants to over 30 accepted pieces. About a year ago, Livia asked me to join the staff of HVCCA to continue these programs, and to be her Deputy Director, an offer that I celebrate every workday.

I want to thank the HVCCA staff, and especially my 11 year hanging and formatting partner in Writing the Walls, Jo-Ann Brody, for all their work to make this program sustainable. I want to thank Livia Straus for her constant support, her sense of risk-taking and, especially, for her active partnership in Writing the Walls.

Mara Mills,

Deputy Director, HVCCA

Thanks to the entire staff, Sarah Connors, Jo-Ann Brody, Cece Iacobuzio, Michael Baracco
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Maryann McCarra- Fitzpatrick for proofing
Bibiana Huang Mattheis and Sarah Connors for photography

All of the wonderful artists who lent us their images for inspiration

Relics

Domenick Pilla

I built a wall of shelves,
A sanctuary for my memories.

I packed the shelves with sacred things,
Bits of this and pieces of that.
Accomplishments and disappointments.
Scar tissue, broken bones, frozen tears, Awkward smiles,
and so many nervous moments.

Memories I refused to release,
memories that refused to release me.
Recollections of people I had once... but no more.
Places that once were... but now gone.
I tore pieces of my heart and stuffed them
safely into cubicles on the shelves.

My private museum neatly catalogued and referenced.
My life moored in the safe harbor of crammed shelves.
I was comforted that my existence was contentedly
justified.

I transported the shelves with me everywhere.
I let them decide the dimensions of the home where I
lived.
I stopped time, I thought.
I possessed time. I thought.

I intend to purge one day .
But not today. Not tomorrow. Some day... some day.

Favela

Wayne L. Miller

- a Brazilian shanty town

garbage piles
available for squatting
water drips
memory dregs
hand to mouth
please cap
when occupied
pick your color
odd red on (7,8)
must be foreigners
food smell
knock knock
turn it down
knotted ropes
kids climb
neighborhood
turf wars
get the f..k out
inhale smoke
drama love
argument sleep
dream plan
climb towards
a top corner
apartment
not downward
mobility swept
by night shift



Leonard Drew, Number 43, 1994-1996

I Am Dust Motes in Sunlight Bob Zaslow

(inspired by Laura Battle, Barbara Korman, Brigitte NaHoN, and Todd Murphy and Livia Straus respectively)

I am dust motes in sunlight.
I am points on a map that point to points in a space.
To the bits of dust, I say, keep moving off the frame.
To the sun, I say, keep moving at the speed of light.
But that goes without saying.

I am branches in the wind.
I am a black forest on a white pedestal.
To the tree, long gone, I say, thank you for your gift.
To each branch, reborn, I ask, did you really mean to look so suave?

I am the paradox of strong and weak.
I am shreds of rags versus twice-smelted steel.
To the invisible thread, I say, you surprised me with your tenacity.
To the so visible steel, I say, you surprised me with your tenderness.

I am the stag with branches and no antlers.
I am the branches with a stag and no tree.
To the stag, I say, life's about surprising moments, yes?
To the branches, I say, life's about surprising movements, n'est pas?

I am balance and grace.
I am imbalance and grace.
To balance, I say, you please me.
To imbalance, I say, you please me, too.

I am I
I am also Thou
To "I," I say, You are like God in Michelangelo's painting.
To "Thou," I say, You are like Adam, just a synapse away from God's finger.
I say, You and I are transformed by an immaterial space between us.
But that goes without saying



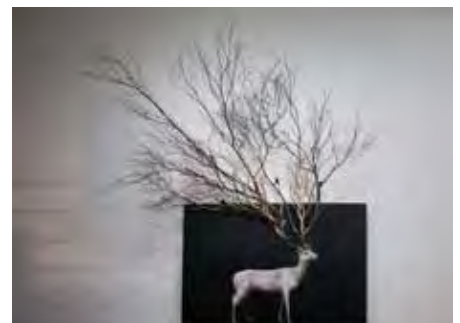
Laura Battle, Heart, 2005



Barbara Korman, Looking at Woods, 2009



Brigitte NaHoN, Revinniir Zagaizz N69, 1 (21), 1999



Todd Murphy, Samuel, 2016

My Relationship with Food (The Pros and Cons of Eating)

Liz Burk

has always been marked
with ambivalence, filled with images
of spaghetti thin women, concave tummies,
haunted cheekbones, and nights of seamless sex
unmarred by unseemly ripples
where none should be

I remember a time when eating food
was unfettered by impending crisis, calorie
not yet a word in my young vocabulary, a time
when a box of chocolates, lined up
in pleated paper jackets, presented a joyous excursion
into the mysteries of coconut creams, cherries
in sticky syrup, smooth truffles melting on the tongue—

when fettucini alfredo and a loaf of hot garlic bread
slathered with butter was followed by chocolate mousse
topped with whipped cream—when a big mac and greasy fries
accompanied by a thick chocolate shake (a sure remedy
for hangovers) was not followed by a dessert
of chocolate laxatives and nights of binge and purge

For years I ate like a Tibetan monk—brown rice, seaweed,
steamed vegetables, an occasional creature from the sea,
a diet for spirit and soul but unfit for aggressive energies
of the western world, or so the men I married complained.

So I ventured into supermarkets, wandered down aisles
to elevator music in a mass marketed hypnotic trance
trying to concoct family meals. Rows of canned soups,
frozen pot pies, waxy vegetables, marbled meats
mocked me, threw me into a flustered frenzy.
Recipes were excursions into enemy territory
—stir, fold, boil, beat, broil, or bake—
the kitchen my nemesis until I fled
into the safe haven of the working world,
and resolved my domestic dilemma
by only marrying men who could cook.

But lately, as I age, I become less concerned
with image, I find preparing food
a meditation and a pleasure
sweet mystery of spices, delicate folding
of sour cream into whipped cream cheese,
poured into graham cracker crust mixed
with fresh strawberries, a hint of raspberry
vinegar. My first perfect cheesecake,
and once again, I am hooked.



Orly Cogan, Confections, 2010 (detail)

Desire

Verity O'Connell

I'm pressing my nose up close
So close that it flattens against
The cool hard window
I'm pressing to get a better look
The glass a solid barrier against all
My desires building up
Inside my body
I look at the
Sweets and cakes and temptations
Mouth-watering works of art
Kept from me fueling
My growing hunger
Glowing icing in shades of
Pale pink
Lilac flowers
Intricate designs made of
Blue and yellow and white
Layers stacked high
Trying to outdo the one next to it
All my dreams imagined in batter
And made with loving hands
I reach deep inside
Pockets that I know are empty
Fingering through lint
And holes beginning to form
Watching as a duplicate of me with
Rosie cheeks and golden braids
Gets to select whichever
Piece of heaven she wants
I dream of the tastes
And sensations
Upon my tongue
And it is just as sweet as hers

A Few Sweet Minutes

Karen Marie Marmer

Have some cupcakes
and a few brownies
some layer cake
with a slice of pie
perhaps some chocolate fudge
and a few cookies
and wash it all down
with pudding topped
with whipped cream

These chocolate, vanilla, and berry confections-
are they the very reflections
of affections gone awry?

I guess it's all fluff
the stuff meant to soothe
and smooth
and delight
as they beckon to us
to take a bite
or a lick
daring us to resist its slick
seduction
with a coy introduction
or perhaps
to invite us to enter
and stay
in the World of Okay
that lasts for a few sweet minutes

before the sadness returns



Orly Cogan, Confections, 2010 (detail)

Not much left of you

Julie Nord

Not much left of you, is there? Poor girl.
Guess I won't ask what became of
your head, your legs, your arms . . . nor
who did this to you and was it an accident or act
of malice or some warped thing you may
inexplicably have done to yourself? I mean,
it's clear you're doing your best under
unfortunate circumstances and in your
un-limbed, dismembered state and, anyway,
how could you answer me if I asked?
You have no ears, no brain, no mouth . . .
I have to admire, though, how you've kept up
your remains. Really, the sheen and the whiteness
of your skin is just gorgeous. Of course it's cold
and hard, and probably fragile to a fault. I certainly would
hope
no one would touch it with anything hard or pointy. And
then the exquisite
appliques—or tattoos?—that have spread across
the full field of your porcelain torso! Green, blue, violet
striding over all that white, the refinement of it! The
tastefully implied
fecundity! And I wouldn't worry that you can't get to
the gym
anymore because-- just look at you--you've never been more
trim and those
creeping flowers and vines do play up all your
best assets, don't they? I would kill for that derriere.
That slim belly sloping down to, well, what might have been
your private parts if you were keeping them private but, hey,
why wouldn't you flash them boldly for the whole world
to see
since they're all you've got left--them and your pretty, pretty
feet still
treading your rocky circle with the help of the crutches you
rock: I love,
by the way, how you're wearing them: at a jaunty angle like
you're dancing, although
I don't quite understand how you hold onto them, what with
having
no hands and no arms, but I guess it's all a part of your
feminine mystique and I'll tell you, you bring to my mind
a whole new take on the Venus de Milo—no, really, you do—
so just keep
doing what you're doing, girl, don't change a thing!
I think it's working for you. Anyway, you look better than I do,
although,
come to think of it, that's not saying much, is it?

Fog Horn

Margo Taft Stever

Biddleford Pool, Maine

Mother mother blistered down,
your dreams have drunk too much.

Band-aids rip your skin, blue
bruises mottle your arms.

as if you never could sleep
enough, the long-winded ashes

of sleep, damp with verbena
sleep, the spectral vocabulary,

the torn covers of sleep; you
erase yourself from bed.

Will you rise up to yell
for your dead husband or crack

a plate on your grandson's
head? Will you wander

the streets in your nightgown
or bang pots in the kitchen?

No one can live on Wood Island,
across the channel from your summer

house where two husbands died
too young, the fog horn

too deafening. Seagulls and cormorants
raise chicks in tumult. The blurt

of the fog horn gone amok:
it won't give up, sometimes no
matter

how clear of cloudless,
an awful insistence



Camille Eskell, Resurrection, 2004

Mother's Milk

Sarah Connors

Her hands half-planted on the bar
The cool marble against her palms
Keeps her grounded to this world, barely
Surrounded by overwhelming reminders of her purpose

Her blank face
A weary, almost accusatory gaze
The mechanical process of expression as she asks,
"Oh, please, what can I get you?"

She dreams of being fully nude,
Hand expressing into crystal goblets
Her bare breasts proudly streaming,
Ringing against the glass, echoing in space
Mother's Milk

And Then One Day

Kahlil Koromantee

It was her first time protesting anything and anyone
Her mother had taught her to complain on her back
Wasn't so much family expectations and colonial
teachings
But the courage it takes
To turn a miserable existence into a way of life
She's always been better at motherhood than dead
He'd mock her all the time about it in that crowing
voice of his
His other barmaids would mock her too,
Knowing her defenselessness
She'd somehow managed to lose her pride
And now her position
After he threatened to keep her share if she came up
short again
He's known to hang babies from high windows
You never forget a thing like that

It was her first time protesting anything and anyone
But she still found it in her to do something
Today or never
Her father had taught her that absence is a tactic
Being mocked was nothing compared to a king of
nothing
So she carefully measured how many shots of salmo-
nella it takes
To kill a mocking bird.



Asya Resnikov, Wet Bar, 2016 Expression, 2016

Amulets of Memory

Robert E. Miss

A father and son push their six-foot seine
down Linganore Creek in the day's afterglow,
sloshing into the night.
Their prey are mad toms, those tiny catfish
that swim upstream when disturbed.
Good for bass bait in late summer
when the rivers are too clear to catch minnows.
The son, now grown and a Navy man,
is riding a River Patrol Boat up the backwaters of the
Mekong River,
watching for Viet Cong along muddy embankments
before night closes down and ground fire erupts.
Those Linganore nights crouch in the back of his memory,
to be drawn out for comfort.
When thunder storms turn the Monocacy River the color
of tomato soup,
the runoff from the Greenfield farms upriver,
fishing becomes impossible.
Father and son will shoot the rifles at Furnace Ford
bridge,
drift under the stone aqueduct of the old C&O Canal,
marshalling into the clear expanse of the Potomac River
to fish for the day,
marveling at the occasional osprey
which plunges from a great height into the current
and emerges with a fish wriggling in its talons.
Amulets of memory afford this sailor a protective
distance
from the muck and mayhem of the Mekong Delta.
He dreams of fishing once more on the rivers of his
childhood.

MUD Scrolls

Edward Currelley

Scrolls rolled in mud, planted to ground
Silent invisible voices, stories of old told anew
A silent chant of binding all life, in one world, with
one goal
A version without pain, without suffering
Crying replaced by song and joyous shout
Pitched only to what the mind's eye can see
What the heart can bear
Screams of visceral outpour
Ancestral tongues rolled in scroll
An undeciphered language reaching out
Invisible hands eager to touch, to be held, saved
Dust of mud curled like fresh grown grass
Preserved by sunlight and thunderous storm
The words of righteousness
Sealed within time honored earthly sacrifice
The history of humankind, layered in the banks of
our shores, embedded in the walls of canyons
Invisible layers of our existence
Voices shouting out, crying out and singing out, in
joyful silence



Rachael Rabinowitz, River Library Scrolls, 2002-2014

Tapestry of Words Star Blossom Goddess

Weaving words upon cloth-like vellum,
I cross into a vortex between I and thou,
Between breath and eyes that bond me to artist.

An inner excitement builds,
seeing stich after stich well constructed
as if each one's like a word deep from caves of
my mind.

Pen becomes like crochet needle.
Their yarn expanding my words
with every glance to anchor on page.

Red provides sparkle of beauty,
tempting me to stay and celebrate
the woven masterpiece before me.

Blue darns, vibrate to my heart
for imaginative mind to explode
as time seems to stop with our union.

Yellow like sun penetrates eyes
inside yarns dancing loops
as my song of words intertwines gracefully.

Rainbow colors tickle senses
to become phases upon page
as mind takes off to birth a creation inside our
oneness.

Oneness, shared while two creative hearts merge
as Liz Whitney Quisgard and I meet
in the energetic hallways of our art.

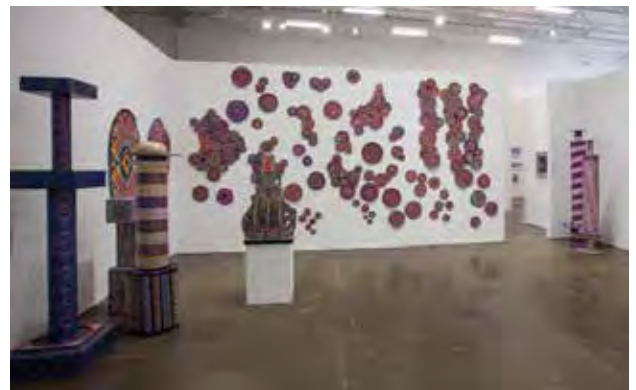
Handsprings Donna Barkman

One step, two step
Slow step, quick step
Now try three for a waltz

Twist and turn
Twirl and side step
Swirl and circle the hall

Let colors pulsate
Make shapes vibrate
A swinging free-for-all

Melodies singing
Harmonies ringing
Dancing up the wall



Liz Quisgard, Installation: 160 Circles, 2011-2012

Tabula Rasa

MaryAnn McCarra-Fitzpatrick

the raw body of America rises up
to say her piece

words yet to be graved into tablets, printed upon paper rolls, the air sweet-thick
with ink enough to fill a swimming pool, words chalked onto slates at a noonday lunchroom,
glasses beaded with tears, feeding all who come and go in this August heat
as Jack P. Kennedy speaks through the inky mist blackening hands and coveralls,
later, the stems in crinkling cellophane,
hers none too shabby, either....

newsprint speeding, sinuous, through the machines, at twenty miles an hour,
the paper-capped pressmen lounge and smoke and turn their hands to the work of words, noisy, dirty,
dangerous, that, neatly folded, accompanies her black coffee and grapefruit

the raw body of America rises up to say her piece as the Yellow Kid looks on and Archy taps out lovesongs
for Mehitabel (formerly Cleopatra, ah, how she patters....)

Shall the voice of liberty be muted?
No—we threw kings off an age ago—and rightly so.

Situation Wanted: Female

Situation Wanted: Male

Daily bawlings and brawlings between the sheets: voice of the people, vox populi,
vox veritas, vox et lux, lux et veritas

Ribbon heads in Bookman, Century, and Cheltenham:

TEXT OF ROCKEFELLER LETTER

Allies Bid Soviet

U.S. Moon Rocket Fired

SOVIET RESUMING

Moon Shot

STEEL STRIKE ENDS

Offensive

KENNEDY

Be not obdurate, open your deaf ears and blinded eyes,
scan the column-lengths that tell truth,
the raw body of America rising up
to say her piece



Kristján Guðmundsson, Drawing 8, 1988-1990

Triptych Tony Howarth

Narcissus

If he spent all his time staring at his reflection, what if it rained. If a curious fish bubbled it into a ring of ripples. If he touched it because he wanted to caress his beautiful face, making himself into nothing but a splash. Isn't that what Teiresias meant, predicting he will grow old only if he does not get to see himself. Isn't that the point for all of us trying to see our selves, when always yet another self shatters whatever self we've managed to conceive. Isn't that what happened when I spent my first 13 years figuring out who I am. That's the moment I'm propelled to Cleveland, dumped in an American high school, like a jar of jam stored on a shelf with the housepaints. The same at every turn of life. Until now. With fewer adventures to trigger change, I sit and sort through the memories of my many selves and look at who I was.

Lost in the Clutter

Squirreled away in cubicles along a wall, rusty brown with age, wrinkled and torn, memories, my yellowing citizen papers; the scarf my mother tore to pieces when I told her I was leaving her behind; the neck brace I wore after I fell down the stairs and broke my neck; shattering events crammed into metal boxes. But where is the army, told never to volunteer for anything, when the sergeant asked who can type, on a whim, held up my hand and became the company clerk, all the everyday whimsical adventures, the stolen kiss in the moonlight, the whirring of a hundred humming birds on the California beach, careless moments of chance and impulse, harder to retrieve.

Keep the Homefires Burning

I don't think I can do it, much inclined to stagger, lose my balance, with nobody beside me to naggle me no, nobody to grab the wedges and take my place, I take the chance, hurl a sledgehammer over my head, pound the wedges deep in the logs, not a moment to look back on, but the joy of the moment, slower, more cautious than I used to be, I fill the woodshed with firewood to last the year.



Leonard Drew, Number 43, 1994-1996

Dialogue with ANATYE (Bush Potato) Susan Schefflein

Spider web of my soul
sing me to sleep
while I float on the red channel
where years ago the child
let the fish fall.

I follow but cannot find.
Sing me to sleep
and let the night string
pull me into its path
with forgiving arms.



Margaret Pula, *Anatye (Bush Potato)*, 2014

Eating Our Young

Robert E. Miss

A peaceful drive past Arlington Cemetery.
You fallen warriors who saved our country,
teach us to forgive the hubris
that puts our land in jeopardy.
Help us outlive the power-lust
that blights the lives of our soldier-children.

Where have all the flowers gone?
There's none on the flag-draped caskets
of our daughters or sons.
Their valor remains hidden from sight
in their transport home.

Where have all their arms and legs gone?
An explosive device has taken every one.
Tens of thousands blown to kingdom come.

How long before this generation
rises up against the remorseless theft
of our nation's sense of hope?
Will it take three-score years or more
to restore our pillaged self respect?

Rogue beasts within are eating our young.
When we the people deal with this,
the terror without will be undone.

1945 France

Thea Schiller

Inside the fallow field
Is a carved flowered oil tank.
Hollow and open,
I imagine a thousand men from Trinidad
coming with pieces of colored candy,
Hitting the steelpan instrument
bringing Calypso music
To the continent.



Cal Lane, Map of the World, 2010, Ammunition box 2, 3, 5, 8, 2014

Jazzing the Quilt

Catherine Wald

I got blues in my bones,
they bleed through when horns moan.
My breath soars, my notes spin
in a whirling red wind on a
pulsing-hot quilt.
Dig those squiggly vibes!
I don't need to wear stilts
to prove I'm alive;
I don't need some MC
to tell folks I've arrived.

I got hips, yes, Lucille –
watch them reel, wheel, and deal,
maybe flip, maybe steal --
can't deny their appeal,
or their fine workmanship,
how they rise, how they dip.
Ideal? No, they're real --
never hide what I feel.

Got black hands with white palms
need no help, aid or alms
to spread frenzy or calm.
They're my own magic wands
my bling, wings and charms.
They'll abscond with your qualms,
but can't do any harm,
so don't juice the alarm.

All you need is some Faith
and a Ring of pure Gold
a needle of steel that knows where to go
some lively bright thread,
strong fabric – a swathe --
tunes that never get old
and a mold you can break
to dance off all your aches.



Faith Ringgold, Jazz Stories: Mamma Can Sing,
Papa Can Blow #2 Come on Dance with Me, 2004

The History Lesson

Gene Tashoff

I'm sitting at my desk on the 29,164th day, 699,936th hour, 41,996,166th minute,
25 billionth 197,696,420th second of my life – looking back, looking in, looking on,
looking out as another day slips away -
and the sun sizzle drops off the horizon, done with us for now, anyway.

The photographs on my walls reveal blood-close relatives as youths with unlined faces,
full shocks of hair, brash with expectations, indulging their dreams, heads full of possibilities, bodies ripe for
sexual exploration, eyes open to the future, and assuming one.

I'm there, too, worrying but also wondering
where I can make my way, take my pleasures, leave my mark, unfurl my flag -
its imagined colors blue like my eyes, gold for my needs,
grey for the uncertainty I feel,
maybe more than the others.

I have a backpack on in oh so many. I carried them into the woods,
where I could lose the city, but also to work, where I could find my true self.
or at least one of them.
I carried guns, too, as a military policeman subject to the draft.
And newly born children who needed care more than cash then.

I carried a head full of words as a scribe for products and services: words to put
into celebrities mouths between their movies and t.v. shows, but also for that tribal display of resistance, long
before the current ones - shouted words to carry messages to Washington to stop a war not worth all the death
and destruction, when I dubbed myself
a corporate hippy before others could.

I carried myself like a somebody of the moment, whose words meant something to someone
I still do, maybe to you. As possibilities arise on the pages piled up on my computer and on the pads on my desk,
with the tip of my tongue and the back of my brain working to find ways to fill them with stories and poems in
books and at readings.

I visit my muse and the news, so I can keep
making history, albeit my own.



Yardena Youner, Class Reunion, 1993

Cerf Blanche

Moira Thielking

Your sudden whiteness
staggers. I hold my breath.
You are la beauté, la liberté,
la noblesse oblige.
Your sole duty born?
To hush all who patter past.

As voyeur, I dwell in the dark
forest bleeding to the edge
of your canvas. It is night.
You stand there, un mystere,
one eye considering—
poised in that instant
before flight, while I

feel the weight of dark forest
sprouting from your deep core
and shoulder its burden of fears.
It is cold. I know this by the halo
of frozen breath huffed
about your muzzle.

Our gazes lock.
Do you see me in my black dress,
limned against white gallery walls?
And would that place me, and thus you,
in heaven instead of dark forest?
In a milk-fed blizzard? A sun-filled cloud?

Do I appear a singed angel
to you, who have branched and
become forest incarnate?
Tell me. Write me a poem.
Carte blanche.

I hope I arrest you in some way.
I do not feel noble, cannot pretend
to beauty. I am flawed.
What is my humble obligation?
To observe, to imagine, to project.

What if you and I changed places?
We might not even notice one another—
you, white on a white-washed wall,
me, vanishing gently into your inked night.

Luminous Antlers

Rachel Berghash

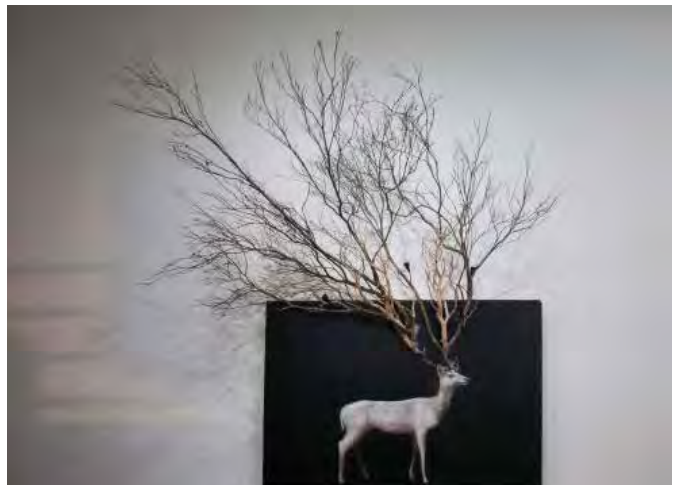
My lassitude is about carrying
a millstone of indecision, pails of muddy thoughts.

It is about walking in the sun
alone, where trees nor flowers grow.

But when I see the gentle stag,
antlers luminous with stars,

carrying so softly
what seems to be a burden,

my lassitude dissolves, and I could
carry my weight to the end of the world.



Todd Murphy, Samuel, 2016

In Stripes of Changing Patterns

Karen Marie Marmer

Sometimes all I want
is to hide
in the tall grass
letting the sun
shine down gently
landing on me
in stripes of changing patterns
the wind, buffered
by sleek stalks as they sway
back and forth
 back and forth
back and forth

Such beautiful
protection
from a world
so cruel
and confusing

Here, in the tall grass
I can dream
I can be safe
I can feel love

Timeless Trees

Rachel Berghash

Like a constellation of stars the trees gathered
in the park next to my house, tirelessly
with inexorable energy their blossoms shine.
I sing of the visible,
the aural, sounds of merriment,
and the gladdened hearts of those who reap,
as I linger between two rows of trees
and delicious sunlight.
Life preys and they'll begin to falter.
I ask not to fear the breaking of order and form.
But these, these timeless trees, do not break.
They soar and shine and stand the test of time.



Barbara Korman, Looking at Woods, 2009

We Know This Is True Les Von Losberg

The heart of the world
Pulses everywhere. It echoes
In the fragile confines
Of our many bodies,
At our wrists and temples,
Ankles and necks,
Testament to the mystery
Of the living pathways
That make all life possible.

We know this is true, and yet
It is as if we are unendingly
Ignorant, unutterably alone,
Each one's understanding
Of the world's deep mystery
Lost in the warp and weft
And bewilderment of experience,
As if each understanding
Were but a single thread--
Submerged, subsumed,
All but invisible and overwhelmed—
In the story of the tapestry
Enfolding and unfolding through us.

We listen to the same song,
It seems, across an infinite distance,
The beating of the world's heart,
Like a bell tolling, unrequited,
For our love and attention.

Stop, take heed to the ringing In your ears.
Now there is this, this poem, this bridge.



Peter Bynum, Illumination of the Sacred Forms, 2017

Deep Core

Rachel Berghash

When the punishment is meted out
the sky will turn to copper,
and the earth to steel. It will not rain
and nothing will grow.
But the Great Horned Owl
will still roost on his large bare tree,
eyes powerfully acute,
and squirrels beneath will quicken their steps.
Our stone-like heart will turn to flesh
curled around its deep core.
We will still embrace our children, closely,
in the dusk and dread of night.



Laura Battle, Heart, 2005

The Colors of the World Are Running Les Von Losberg

The colors of the world are running
With fear, with sorrow, with rage.
Nothing solid takes up residence
At the center, but the center explodes:
Life, domestic and wild, shatters
Or flees; machines hover over
Every catastrophe, dropping bombs,
Taking pictures, picking up mementos,
Scraps of things to turn into souvenirs
For soul-sick tourists and grade-schoolers
On a fieldtrip in search of a world
Half forgotten.

What was worshipped Is toppled,
Reduced to rubble in the dust.
What was loved Is forsworn
And abandoned. What was valued
Is shredded and rises to the skies
Like butterflies; like wishes, desires,
Dreams; like ash in the wind,
Or deconstructs, like colors
That bleed out or iron gone to rust.

Who is responsible for this
Concatenated chaos? Is it me?
Is it you? What is this infinite
Distance that we think that we
Must travel to the truth,
When we know it lies so close
Between us—I and Thou—
Unheeded and abused,
Waiting to be served?



Erica Harrsch, Inverted Sky, 2012

Emancipating American Goddess Aunt Jemima, A Prose Poem Lorraine Currelley

There is no beauty in the stories of this quilt. Only America's truth. A tainted truth hiding in buried stench, one that resurfaces to break a failing peace. A failing peace that remains me I nor my children are truly seen as human and free. How many more will have to fall for breathing in the wrong color?

My breasts have suckled your babies before I was allowed to suckle my hungry and crying own. I have picked God's cotton from sun up to sun down, fingers bleeding, back broken. My spirit crying and body aching for liberty, where there was none. Washed your clothes, mopped your floors, cooked your food, nursed your sick and emptied your bed pots. I have fought off and submitted to the unwanted advances of pale death. This unwelcome death that fathered my children and sold them off at greed's price. I have cared for the same babies who were given my children as birthday gifts. Children who when grown sold off my children never acknowledging my suffering, pain, humanity nor the memory of the life giving milk of my breasts nor the comfort of my healing arms. I have offered a mother's tears to deaf ears. Yet, I continue to be dehumanized, marginalized, and treated as the other; and my image ridiculed by ignorance.

Yet, I am of the lineage of Queens Hatshepsut, Tiye, Nefertiti, Makeda, Candace, Cleopatra, Nzinga, Yaa Asantewa, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Idella Hightower, Annie Daniels Currelley, Alma John, Fannie Lou Hamer, Adelaide Sanford, and Maxine Walters. A sacred image housing courageous women. I ask, Who's Really Afraid of Aunt Jemima?



Faith Ringgold, Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima, 1983

Time and Space

Bob Zaslow

Time is mind
Mind is time
Don't mind the time
Or time the mind
Listen
Just listen
To the silence
Look
Just look
At the spaces
Don't denigrate it, obfuscate it,
Rate it, grate it, or berate it
Be in the space, not of it
Use each sense, and really love it
Park your mind way over there
And be aware, just be aware
Put ego's thoughts into a box
Stuff in your To-Do's and clocks
Don't let your nows all disappear
Giving birth to guilt and fear
The space between the bars
Holds the lion
The space between the notes
Makes the song
The space between the words
Gets you crying
The space between the ears
Makes you strong
Time is mind
Mind is time
Don't mind the time
Or time the mind
Rise
Above thought
Forget
What you're taught
And look
Just look
At the spaces
And listen
Just listen
To the silence



Brigitte NaHoN, Revinniir Zagaizz N69, 1 (21), 1999

Samuel

Marc Straus

I am the brush, the sand, the stand of birch,
fauna along the shore. White Fallow deer
like me must learn to be invisible in Coastal Georgia.
Here on Saint Simon's Island where the first slaves
came to work I have become a phantom.

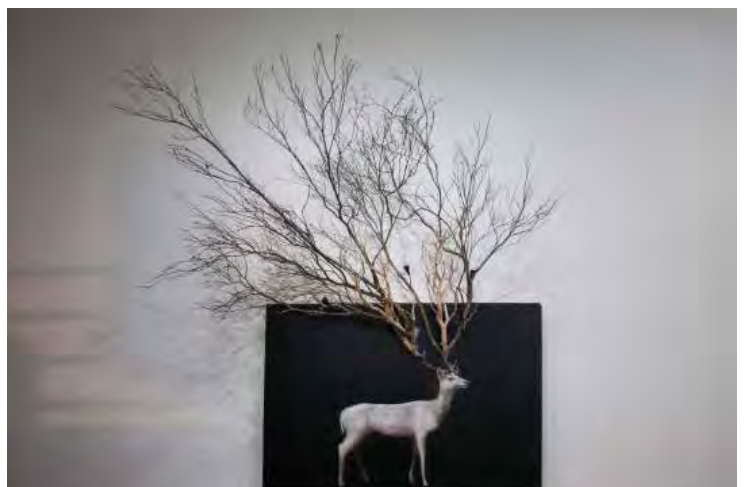
We were brought here to be hunted
and for generations they killed my fathers,
my uncles and brothers. Shall I believe now
it is a sanctuary? That they are here only
to see alligator, possum, dolphin, 300

species of bird? Today, I watch again
this ungainly man sitting quietly by himself

with sketch pad and camera. He is bushy
and brown-haired. He breathes in the succulent wood
and water. He relishes everything living and dead.

What if he saw my grey white coat, my spindled
legs and outsized antlers? My mother named me Samuel,
she said for the thick clouds, the summer breeze, for the
brace of life, and the memory of our ancestors. She called me
Samuel, she said, for the last of the judges.

last of the judges.



Todd Murphy, Samuel, 2016

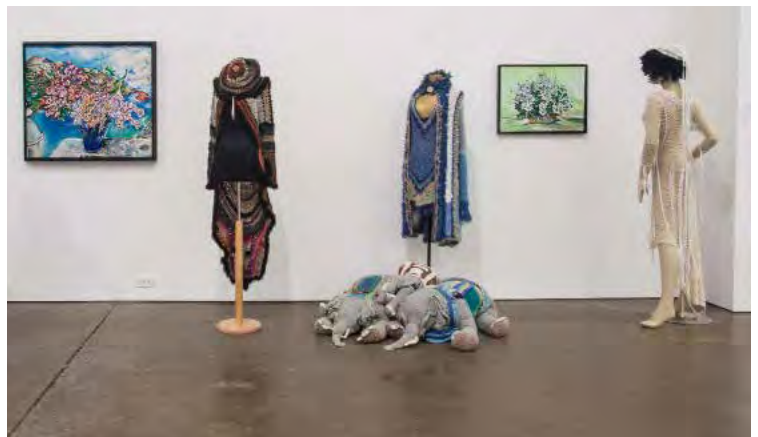
I Describe My Needlework Nirvana in the Form of a Pantoun Pamela Manché Pearce

Hey, look at me: slip-stitching, popcorning, knotting off and chaining on,
crocheting booties for babies and Irish-waving pillows for bedheads.
It's me! In the glow of those flame stitches, I've lost all my wan.
Thanks mittens. Thanks afghans. Now I've tossed out my meds.

Crocheting booties for babies and Irish-waving pillows for bedheads,
my problem it seems was just overthinking!
Thanks mittens. Thanks afghans. Now I've tossed out my meds,
I'm happy and mellow and I'm not even drinking!

My problem it seems was just overthinking!
Granny squares and potholders not snacking or snoozing,
I'm happy and mellow and I'm not even drinking!
Bargello this time, or Tunisian lace, perhaps? All good whichever I'm choosing.

Granny squares and potholders not snacking or snoozing,
It's me! In the glow of those flame-stitches, I've lost all my wan,
Bargello this time, or Tunisian lace, perhaps? All good whichever I'm choosing.
Hey, look at me: slip-stitching, popcorning, knotting off and chaining on!



Susan Obrandt, A Serious Art Discussion, 2017

What's Pretty? What's Sweet?

Julie Nord

Whatever's pretty,
whatever looks sweet,
will call to us, right?
And so when I spot
the candy-toned,
tidy, shaped forms,
your polka dots, ripples, rosettes,
lacy scalloped edgings and
swirling curlicues all spread across
the long, lined board—I can't help myself—
I want to know whose gathering has brought about
all this icing and chocolate and cream filling and
sugared fruit and can I be a guest? Pretty please?
You're whispering sweet nothings
in my mind's ear and I could swear that I smell
your aromas all the way to the door . . .

But you are not quite
as you seem. Not the sugar rush
of the moment nor the mouthful of indulgence that I want
to guiltily give in to . . .
Like so much else, you are
substantially, materially, at odds with
the painstakingly fabricated picture you present.
You are not the Candyland, the Willie Wonka Factory,
the Dream Come True Birthday Party that my inner baby
is a sucker for. No, you are a wonder work of a different stripe.
Cotton and felt, not butter and milk. Not almond paste
but yarn. And ribbon. Made with needles and hooks,
not beaters and spoons. Not chocolate, strawberry, caramel,
hazelnut, cherry . . . You are fabulous, lovingly made,
a jaw-dropping execution of craft and yet your flavors are strictly
for the eyes and mind and even while I delight in them I will admit:
Baby me is sad to learn
this is a mostly grown-ups' pastry party
and I cannot eat it.



Orly Cogan, Confections, 2010 (detail)

Thou Beside Me, Singing In The Wilderness – Homage To Omar Khayyam Merle Molofsky

LOVER: You spread a magic carpet, dazzling and lumpy,
in the sands of the oasis, and read our fortune. You see...

BELOVED: The crumbs of a loaf of bread, spilled wine,
a Book of Verse that tells our story anew...

LOVER: ...to every lover looking for the Friend,

BELOVED: No. To each other.

LOVER: Are we the same? Lover is Beloved,
Beloved is Lover. Both seek the Friend. Both are the Friend.

BELOVED: Edward Fitzgerald was the Lover,
Omar Khayyam the Beloved.

I spread the cards upon the carpet, and the lumps
become your Desire. O Sacred Fool, you seek
a Magician, or a Priestess, and find yourself crushed
by the Tower crashing down upon your dreams.

Let's link but two quatrains, a circling star
around another circling star. It's not bizarre
to miss what we have never known, to grieve
the love song never played upon your sad guitar.

Lie upon the dazzling silk I weave
And I will conjure dreams meant to deceive.
If you forsake my words and wander far
There's nothing left in words that we believe.

Pissed Off by the New Emily Dickinson Biopic Ceci Iacobuzio

Dead women follow me
Behind shower curtains and flying
Out windows, grasping me with
Wisps of flesh, dropping trails of maggots
as they

Follow

From the bottom of rivers

They bring cupcakes fresh from the oven

They call me a fucking reactionary pull it
together—

It's funny because she died.

She was a woman and she died.

I see them everywhere.

They are buried with not even those

Lumps of reject marble given to
unbaptized babies

Shoved under the carpet and

In the attic and in the closet and

In the attic and in the closet and ...



Antonio Santin, Arcana, 2015

An American Haiku

Anon

Amidst the green, one leaf blue, implodes.



Cristina Alvarez-Arnold, Untitled, 2012-17

Under a lamp of little light

Wayne L. Miller

I read newsprint covering fish:
sportsman's records, weather reports,

tidal tables, seafood restaurant reviews,
advertisements of healthy red gills in a seascape.

An article about tuna is in American English. I glance away—
it changes into hieroglyphics on stretched deer hide.

I buy ideas, planning to keep them on ice, but forget
until the dream lulls— pages are scattered on the floor.

I smell fishstink as I arrange sections—
News, Week In Review, Arts and Leisure.

After gathering last week's magazines,
I eat my breakfast of kippers and eggs.

Feature articles censor my sight, silence my sound,
editorials press my mind to ignore the obvious,

advice columns chide me to follow the crowd,
to abandon unsuitable ideas.

Too scared to unblink, too tired to think proper,
too unsure to judge myself competent to judge myself,

I unroll scrolls in an ancient library—
histories, auguries, philosophies.

I spin a papyrus universe around an obvious fish.



Raquel Rabinovich, River Library Scrolls, 2002-2014

Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust

Steve Lewis

"Which of the two heaps do you suppose is me?"

("She Would Have Enjoyed It," George Bernard Shaw)

1.

The Book of Common Prayer says ash and dust.
Yet we all know in our saliva that life begins in wetness,
swamp and muck, hot breath, mouth full of moaning,
slippery fingers and tongues, the suck and swallow, ebb
and flow, every moment an oceanic crash, an explosion
of semen into the dark fallopian river, the viscous egg sac
the rush of amniotic fluid, the bloody crowning
vernix and red streaked plasma clinging to the wailing newborn
squirming into this watery world of air, an amphibian
sucking on the breast, milk squirting all over the place,
wet diapers, dripping nose, tear-soaked cheeks, liquid dreams.

2.

And at the end, as if there is an end to dreams, the heart,
a bag full of clotting blood, lungs stagnant ponds choking
with day lilies, some airless wooden box passing through flames
or disappearing in earth, rich and loamy or dry and sandy,
it doesn't matter. Water always prevails, seeping into cracks,
pooling in ancient cavities, underground aquifers, deep crevasses
of the dripping planetary soul, dark clouds moving
across the endless sky, oceans rising, rivers overflowing,
as we float along, paddling down narrow estuaries of eternity,
bending back willow branches, leaning over gunwales, reaching down
down into the warm fetid mud, the muck of it all
slipping slipping slipping through our cupped fingers.



Jayoung Yoon, Web of Life, 2015-2017, Infinite Inner and Outer Space, 2016

Lying in a Hammock at Duckdog Cottage in Rodanthe, NC

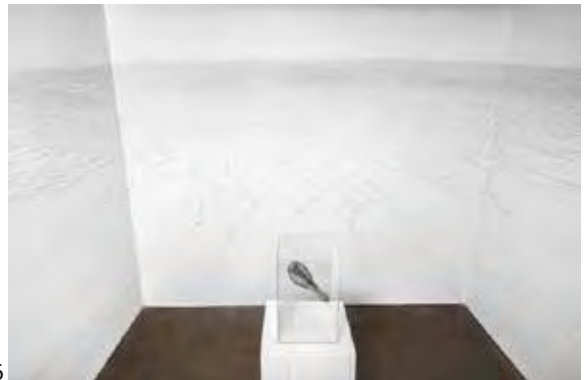
Steve Lewis

1.

Open book facedown on my chest, I am suspended in air, pondering the words of an old friend who told me he's wasted his life. It's a familiar story, I think privately, certainly not his alone, a sad tale told by another modern man in search of an earthbound soul. I'm not a shrink, though, not a minister, just a writer, and he's a dear friend, so I told him with decades of unearned authority that he was dead wrong. Soon enough spouting all the good works he has done in his life, his artful swagger, his "own brand of magic," all that is him, no one else, when I heard, I hear now, John Coltrane's stunning breezy version of the original sickly sweet My Favorite Things in my inner ear, the two of us drifting off in a riff about baseball and cars, music and women, everything we've been gabbing about for sixty years. So yes, I am a coward. A soother not a soothsayer. I didn't call him a jackass for thinking like some empty headed twelve year old, for believing after all these long and hard, treacherous and disheartening Aprils, that there are winners and losers in this life, that it all comes down to some silly game, runs on the scoreboard, letters after your name, notches in the belt, a bunch of pitiful fools opening doors for you, kissing your ass, bowing and scraping because of some witless notion that it's possible for someone to squander existence any more than the whales I can barely see from this hammock, spouting and breaching near the horizon, are wasting their lives.

2.

I didn't say that James Wright wrecked a beautiful poem with that sniveling, self-pitying last line, "I have wasted my life." I didn't say what a turd Ezra Pound was for defiling his own Cantos as a "botch...," "stupidity and ignorance all the way through." I didn't say a word about that fool Rimbaud and his pathetic "by being too sensitive I have wasted my life." And yet here I am lying in a hammock on the upper deck of a small beach cottage in Rodanthe, North Carolina, hovering over this barrier island, swaying back and forth, head turned to follow hundreds, maybe thousands of cormorants flying north to south just above the rolling breakers, the click of the rusted S hook as I swing west to east, east to west, west to east, east west west east east west, praying that with my cowardly lies I might have grabbed my friend's arm Just as he was about to jump in front of a train.



House swarming

Alicia Morgan

When it came time to move to a new house I did so with the subtlety of a Mossberg, Mister Man. Crept along each rayless room, counting my disasters: warped floors from that time I nodded out in the bathtub and the water ran over, cracking the ceiling; holes in the walls like shattered teeth from narrowly missing your head with my bloody fist during our massive dust ups; wine stains covering every carpet, couch, and duvet. Distaste and dishonor is my DNA; you chose your poison yet married me anyway.

A rose-tinted English summer shimmers in the cracked vanity mirror, shards prick my feet before I have a chance to sweep them away. Flashback: maybe breaking my childhood Big Bird drinking glass, the one I'd carried over from America, was a bad omen. Yet on happy days we pecked apart homespun food-stuffs with razor thin beaks, two star-eyed starlings, the Archduke of Art and the High Priestess of Poetry. I baked my just desserts: sugar coated tasty cakes for you, and whip-smart sweet tarts for our fancy art friends. My withered heart grew not one, but 10 sizes larger. Time grew wings and flew out of clocks, just for us.

But drugstore cowboys never leave the rodeo; they circle with their ropes, wait for weakness and swoop back in for a cross-body tie. It only took a winter's worth of fever and ague before I came down with the full-blown consumption. No kindly English country doctor was forthcoming with a poultice for my fevered brow.

I danced on tables until my heels were torn and bloodied by butcherbirds. You listened to Shearwater and used watercolor. Suddenly I was a ragged-out New York doll. Oh, Johnny, you stole my thunder and left me for a real artist, one with an Instagram chock full of tasteful abandoned houses and ghost-hunted insane asylums, skillfully filtered in luscious hues of hunter green and cerulean blue. Now my tonic-clonic skullflower blooms in cheerless dawns where pressure drops and eyes swim. Bloodshot and bumfucked in a Hackney squat, I play xenophobic xylophones with bitter mallets, ringing in New Years with symphonic retching. Our house has been taken over by a murder of noisy carrion crows who prefer hardcore EDM as their chirp of choice. When one door closes, another slams shut.



Chris Jones, When The Days Are Growing Shorter, 2016, Where Memory Is Traded, 2016

Silverfishing

Alicia Morgan

Susan stumbled through the maze of scattered books, lit a cigarette and blew a weak stream of smoke through dried spittle caked in the corner of cracked lips. It had been six months since he shoved their things into the dusty duffel under the bed, dragging their daughter along, leaving the door open in his haste. Since then a steady stream of strangers rustled through the house like a pack of angry dogs, snapping between her thighs, breaking and entering. She compiled the mental checklist needed to check out and stubbed the cigarette out on a copy of *The Piano Teacher* with her good hand, the one without the abscess.

Adelia smoothed her severe chignon with singular grace. Her voice lilted like the tinkling of little bells, clear, with perfect diction, the result of hours upon hours of elocution lessons. She moved daintily with a floating elegance that others found comely and refined. Her father had made every effort that at 15, there would be no reason for her to be found disagreeable. Today was her wedding to one Mr. Miller, a 38-year-old cotton merchant, who had the rather unfortunate reputation of being a horse-beater. She stood looking out of the drawing room window, cast a longing glance back towards her beloved books, and bit her lip until she tasted blood.

Cynthia surveyed her kingdom from the corner office: a maze of shiny new IBM PC-5150s embedded in cubicles containing drone bores, all greasy faces popping up like whack-a-moles at the ding-ding of this morning's donut cart. She abhorred wasted time, motion, and words. Their endless water-cooler chatter was a simultaneous source of irritation and cruel amusement, as she often had her secretary plant rumors and watched them fight amongst themselves. She rolled up the sleeves of her steel grey power suit, squared her shoulders, and licked the tip of her Montblanc, an unfortunate habit she'd carried over from her days as a junior accountant and its endless supply of dry wooden pencils. Today would be a good day for layoffs.

Shana had those legs, legs that went on for days, million dollar legs, hot legs. She laid back on the couch in the unused library with the books that were never cracked, leather bound volumes of the classics that he liked to keep for show. She threw her hot pins in the air, bicycling, flexing, swinging them around, marveling that parts of her body had made her so much money. Shana pulled up her one-sheet on the MacBook and squinted at the money shots: jutting hip bones, a concave rib cage, and a face like a hungry kitten, with enormous green eyes and a candy land mouth with a big juicy lower lip resembling a ripe strawberry. Number one stunner, they said. Teenage rampage. She reached for the bottle of Prosecco and necked it, checked her look in the mirror smeared with yesterday's coke, and pulled her panties back up. Hashtag meetoo, she whispered, and snapped the compact shut.



Chris Jones, *When The Days Are Growing Shorter*, 2016, *Where Memory Is Traded*, 2016

Valediction

Donna Barkman

She stares at us with dark and knowing eyes
face covered by her hijab
carefully constructed of designer ties
she's stripped from her oppressors
I am moving, she says, forward
She is after all a nomad
She knows why men wear these nooses
whose pointed tips hang down to flap their power
to be stroked loyally caressed
She has made a garment that protects her from
that power from glares from assaults
attractive and strong like her
I am leaving, she says
to join my People of the Book, my tribe

one god for all
No need to say "Binnajaah"
I already have good luck

Sunday Best

Jo-Ann Brody

Tall,
Strong,
Lean, and
Lanky.
Striding,
Striving
Walking,
Marching on.
Posed like an Egyptian
Pattern,
Texture,
Everywhere.
Striding
Off to church in your Sunday best.
In your fine clothes:
Shirt and tie,
Skirt and blouse.
With your
Salad bowl faces
Your steel wool hair,
Your feathered hats, and
Button buckled shoes.
Bits and bobs,
Revisited.
Odds and ends
Renewed.
Remnants
Refined into
Art.



Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson, People of the Book: Bedouin Woman

I protest!

Mara Mills

My feminist soul screams at my attraction to this,
this manifestation of males' fear of woman, but
sigh,

it is so beautiful

like the Hijab of my Muslim student who was

pushed aside by fellow marchers at the Women's
March

because she wore,

come-on girls,

it's just a headscarf.

At the Golden Globe, almost all the women
wore Black to show alliance with #MeToo
and against the patriarchal image of women.

I am one of the MeToo, no hashtag, no Hollywood
and I am

officially tired of talking about what a woman wears.

A gathering of stones

Mara Mills

The boys practicing their stone pitches against the
latrine wall
inhaled the fevered exhalations of the oncoming
horde
dragging the black screaming bundle that smelled of
feces.

The boys, their collective penii quivering antennae,
shoved stones into pockets, shirts, fists, and run
behind
the righteous to the place of the bare dirt and lupine
faces.

The righteous heave their bundle in the hole in the
collective center,
tear the black pericarp exposing the face and breast
of woman
bury her to the neck in the womb of mother earth.

Immodesty, disobedience, shame, each word echoed
by her screams, enflame their rapturous lust and the
men cast stones
that fell sure; the boys aim not yet as true, but prom-
ising and satiating.

So enraptured were they that they did not hear when
her screams
stopped and dead silence was born in that barren
place.
Surrounded, she died alone and the earth wept.



Frozen in time

Livia Straus

I glide on a white palate,
Slim, black suited girl with flowing yellow hair trailing luxuriously behind,
My breathe, visible, leads me as I lift my left leg high in an arc
Leaving the right to etch a fine line, a thread
Bordered on either side by a mound of shavings,
Slivers that fluff and shine under the overhead lights in Ice Castle.
I am my mother's daughter,
Of a proud line of tatters,
Transferring icy images to lacy patterns,
Mapping the history of the Axel and the Lutz,
The Choctaw Turn and the Death Spiral,
The Grape Vine and the Pancake Spin.
Her tools were pencil, scissor and needle.
Images performed were sketched and transferred to thin vellum,
Then traced onto fine linen held taut in an embroidery loop,
To be retraced again,
and again, and again, and again...
Then stitch and cut... stitch and cut,
Until the work of lace emerges,
Elegant, intricate,
To frame a face, to bind a bodice of the pretty bride, the dour princess,
The haughty Queen, the handsome courtesan.
Mine is the language of the canvas,
My studio awash with plaster, fine Winsor and Newton oils, Utrecht Natural Chungking Pure Bristle Brushes, pallet knives.
My mind's eye has encrypted my steps.
I transfer memory to canvas, to lush linen,
Tracing images marked by my dancing moves,
T-Stops and glides of my white skates and silver blades.
I push the plaster though the opened pores,
Force my memories into orderly space.
I mimic the rising snow that borders the deftly etched lines,
Leaving behind remains of what had been pure and solid,
Before my human touch.



Katherine Mangiardi
Tracings, (video still), 2017
Revere, 2013

Untitled

Livia Straus

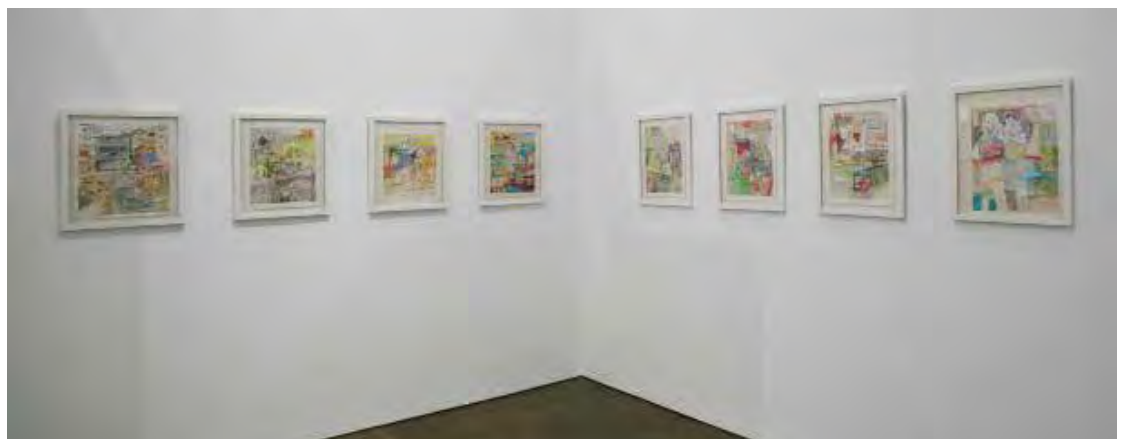
I miss my rotary phone: black, iconic,
Poised on that mahogany table, under that yellowed, parchment shaded light,
Suspended from the wall that transitions from hallway to kitchen,
Letters etched from the touch of my prints,
ABC, DEF, WXYZ, 0 for operator.

My scent is on its mouthpiece,
The moisture of my ear on its handset
As I bend to hear each word,
Savor the sound of a distant voice.

I would tuck the handset under my chin
A violin empessario, my fingers free to dance along the 4x6 paper pad,
To doodle my thoughts, transposing them to paper
Words, caricatures, stories and narratives, unspoken but in my mind-sight,
of Stanley and Carole, and Saul and Leo, and Barbara and Henry.

I am awash with dream images, trivia, memories
The synapses in my brain spark across event and age
Nostalgia born of compressed time where each syllable, each vowel
Bridges decades
Forming one perfect summary of self

I will keep singing my song and, asserting my opinions,
Drawing my drawings and painting my impressions,
Then... I will
Ride into the sunset with my guns ablaze
Leaving behind a piece of who I am,
Imprinted, etched, immortal.



Judith Zabar, Dreams, 1994-1997

JALA JALA

Poems in the Voice of the Artist

Marc Straus

A streak of sunlight lifted off the brown fetid water and touched the corner of the calf' eye. My mother was calling me to come in from the riverbed in Mauritania where mothers call in seventy languages; mine had the sound of a viola string, taut and twanging in the heat.

Then I remember my father's voice cutting through the cacophony of the Pusan fish market which he ran. What was there to do but play with eels wriggling on the floor? One large blowfish still had catgut extended from its mouth and I wound the other end around a nail.

Here in New York the moon is yawning through my studio window. The horizon is a tenement and then a sliver of the Empire State Building, and the cadence of two girls jumping rope. I move a shard of Plexi slightly to the right. I love this brass knob I found today.

Based on Jong Oh, JALA JALA, 2016



Jong Oh, Room Drawing (monochrome) #3, 2017