

The Art of Poetry: An Ekphrastic Evening

A Collaboration of Art and Word



PITTSBURGH **Society of Artists**

FIFTY-FOURTH ANNUAL Exhibition

Friday, November 22

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm



PANZAgallery

115 Sedgewick Street, Pittsburgh PA 15209

Background

In conjunction with its 54th Annual Juried Exhibition, the Pittsburgh Society of Artists Guild endeavored to engage writers with the local community with intent of developing an event of ekphrastic poetry. This would serve to mesh the communities of visual fine art with the written arts. The plan was that writers would craft unique written works that were motivated by the artwork on display in the annual exhibition.

An outward reach was made to the writing community through PSA's members and others. Eleven poets responded to the call and agreed to participate in this journey. The fruits borne by these efforts are presented in this program.

Acknowledgements

To all who participated (artists and writers), who supported, and who attended the evening of poetry, we are deeply appreciative and thank you.

The Pittsburgh Society of Artists

Ekphrastic Poetry

An **ekphrastic** poem is a vivid description of a scene or, more commonly, a work of art. Through the imaginative act of narrating and reflecting on the “action” of a painting or sculpture, the poet may amplify and expand its meaning

Writings and Order of Readings

Eternal Sleep / (We Keep Living Anyway)	Kathryn Zapalo
Resolute Hope / (Dark Matter)	Laura Goris
The Theory of Levitation / (Geeks)	Chris Zapalo
Revolutions / (A River with No Name)	Kathryn Zapalo
Samponia at Night / (Samponia at Night)	Shaheen Dil
City at Night / (Samponia at Night)	Chris Zapalo
Elegy for an Artist Who Loved Cats / (Cattooed)	Stuart Sheppard
FUMO (Clairton Coke Works)	Kayla Sargeson
The Departure / (Safe Travels)	Alyssa Sineni
She is Sunken In / (Global Smorgasbord)	Chris Zapalo
Reflections / (Woman)	Kathryn Zapalo
Visions of War / (Eyes of the Crucifixion)	Kathleen Trew Swazuk
Choices / (One Lies, One Tells The Truth)	Kathryn Zapalo
Bridges / (My Inner Spaces)	Bob Walicki
The Garrulus / (Mojave Ozone Jay)	Chris Zapalo
Awakening / (The Edge of an Awakening)	Deena November
After His Death / (Wall) *	Mary Ellen Raneri
Commemorating	Kathryn Zapalo

* Inspired and created during the event on 22 November 2019

Eternal Sleep

The air outside,
resembles that of cool murky waters,
yet still remains full of life,
frost bitten trees loom in the distance,
shriveled appendages,
pushing all efforts to conserve energy,
who will make it through,
this bitter cruel season,
if not for the God of sun and Goddess of sight,
had these Titans not forged their bonds,
my dearest Selene,
how ever could we stand witness,
absorb your radiance,
the ocean tides would long for your guidance,
it's in part to them,
we gather this night,
gazing upon this cave entrance,
bearing witness,
as you visit Endymion,
a tale of lovers as old as time,
we shall lie in wait,
hunker low on this crest,
hoping to catch a glimpse,
begging that he wakes,
once more again.

- Kathryn Zapalo

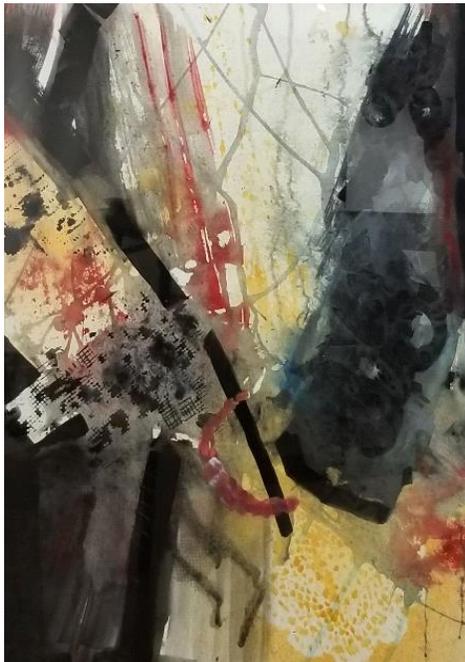


We Keep Living Anyway – Tony Cavalline

Resolute Hope

In the dark spaces
before dusk,
Shafts of splintering
golden day
Collapse.
Remnants of sunsets
fading black.
Desolate landscape
beyond mahogany days
spun senseless
with longing
into melancholy.
Woven threads,
pulled taut
between poles.
Tactile cords of salvation,
Suspension
Quiescence
A slow cadence
fills the darkness.
Life blood,
Pulse
of a resolute hope.
Promise of dawn,
banishes the
dark matter.

-Laura Goris



Dark Matter – Kathleen Zimbicki

A Theory of Levitation

A theory of levitation is put forth with clay bricks and cyanide close at hand. The stool is pumped three times. Pencils are sharpened. The outlets arch. Whippets charge across the ceiling. The lab assistant runs a fever. Klaxons sound the alarm. A Chemical fire! The extinguishing system puffs in answer. A backup generator screams in delight. The good doctor wails, "Get those dogs back in their cages!" The antigravity wears off. "Where is the smoke coming from?" A naughty bit of calculation. The ghost of Tesla sings the eulogy. Our funding has been cancelled.

Chris Zapalo



Geeks – Jody Shell

Revolutions

A self-professed madman,
yet one must contemplate,
the many hats he has worn,
that of a son,
a twirling top of innocence,
of a first love, fragile masculinity,
a man, then husband,
one of pride and stability,
becoming a father, a cap worn thin,
lost to time, thinking more now than of himself,
but as an extension,
the hand marking seconds, hastened it's pace,
this new hat, one filled to the brim with wisdom,
bestowed to all, as any Grandfather could,
we come to see him now, as he is, this dome now fully uncovered,
no longer finds need for facade,
sitting quite patiently, by the river with no name,
for how can you name something,
that which is no more,
for now it lay to waste and barren, dry and full of life no more.

Kathryn Zapalo

A River with No Name –
Manjushree Roy



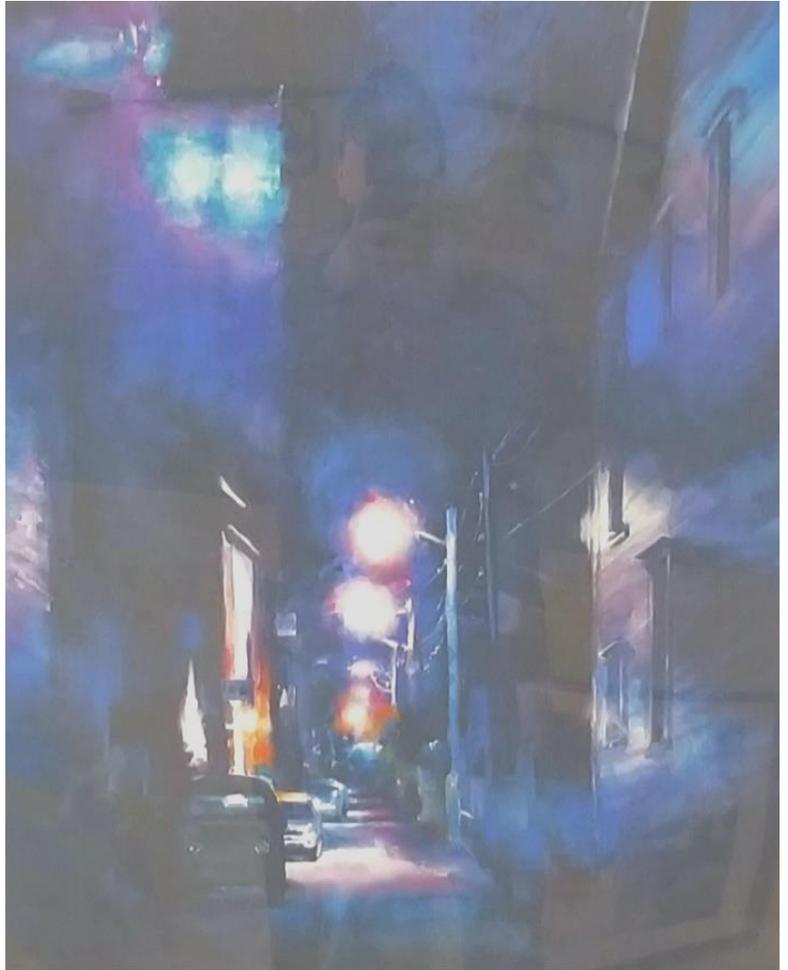
Sampsonia at Night*

**On a water color by Peggi Habets*

Whatever else may come,
the lamplights' frosted glow
will burn upon this empty street,
trucks parked against the black curb
will never stir
with headlights shining,
their signals will not blink
as if to say: "My turn now,
my turn to skid off this dark frame
into the pink and purple night."

Elsewhere the world may churn,
workers strike, and gunsights aim,
whatever links may form and fail,
this sky will never fade to gray,
this blackness will not yield to light,
these structures will still stand,
windows shut against the cold
of endless night, and dreamless sleep
still fall upon the lavender blue haze
of Sampsonia blooming by night.

Shaheen Dil



Sampsonia at Night – Peggi Habets

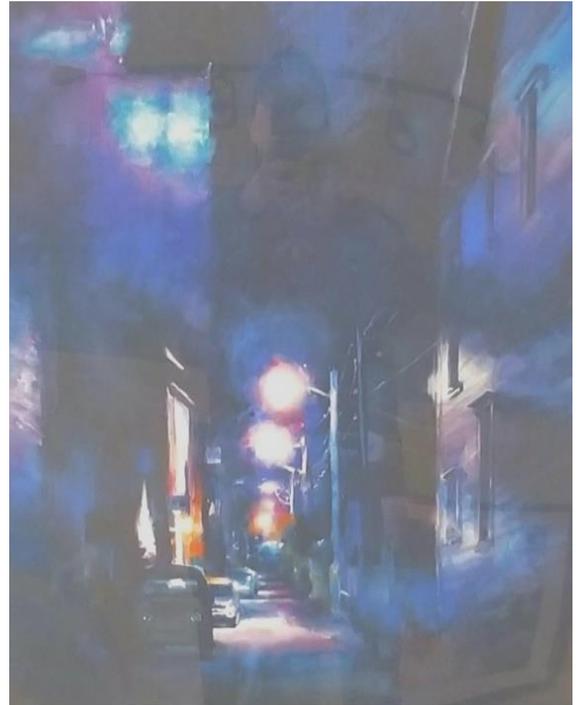
City at Night

Fifteen hundred milligrams of steroid,
Three high balls, a nasty crick in the neck,
tumbling from saloons, the pavement stretches out,
An immense body at rest
And, simultaneously, all in motion
open alley's shape the city's breath
Boilers fume away,
the scratch of heavy boots are thunderous in the quiet,

There is something here, a washed out color,
A shadow pigment, an overturned inkwell,
Cyan (or violet?) set on a chipped brick veneer,
The lens takes up position,
every fifty feet, eighteen hundred lumens shine down,
and still the darkness rushes to fill the space.

How the buildings front, square up, crowd in,
dwarving the drunks,
pushing the air into columns,
muting the trucks with deliveries.
A piano plays uncertain, the squeal of a faulty timing belt
And struggle to find a warm bed.

Chris Zapalo



Samponia at Night – Peggi Habets

ELEGY FOR AN ARTIST WHO LOVED CATS

This is how symphonies should end.
Not in darkness, or light.
But with the fog coming in.
It feels like impressionism, you said,
As I lay beside you on the dock.

I guess you were still in the boat.
Your voice becoming softer under
The slapping sound of the water,
Like someone with no jazz
Trying to invent rhythm.

Do you remember how the clouds
Would squeeze through the window
Of your studio,
Resting on the canvas
Like tulle on a little girl?

After a while I couldn't hear you anymore.
I saw the untied mooring.
Maybe it was just the wind,
Pushing you away.
Or the fog taking you back.

This is how symphonies should end.
Not in darkness, or light.
But like crickets,
Slowly bleeding
Into the silence of dawn

Stuart Sheppard

Cattooed, Soft Comforts
– William Karaffa



Walking Over the 10th Street Bridge

—for *FUMO*

It's the first of September and my grandmother calls
to tell me her cousin's husband died.

They were married 72 years.

I've spent the past two thinking about moving to Savannah,
but there's something about the brown water of the Monongahela
that keeps me here, something grounding in the dirt, the smoke blowing
from whatever factory is still operating across the river.

I look for the graffiti tags like old friends: *AWAKE*, *KURU*,
FTC, *RIP DOK*, *SKITZO* (who I think is in jail
in New York).

In Savannah, there's nothing to hold onto.

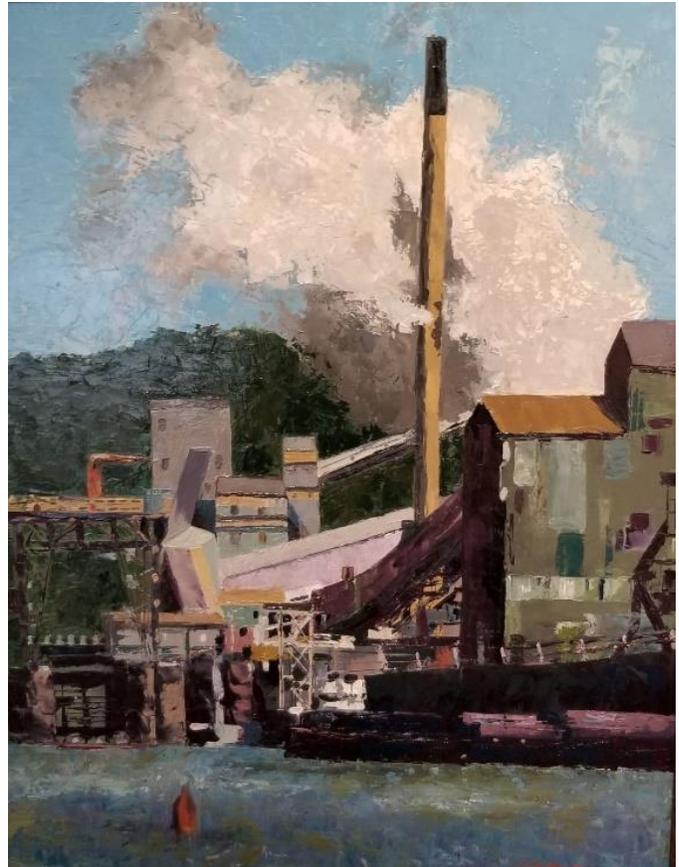
I float on dry land, cling to men who are just as slippery,
say *I love you* in the clichéd, moonlight way.

I don't know how people stay married for 72 years—
or why.

Last night I looked up “how to forgive” on the internet—
nothing new there—

so I move through the Armstrong tunnel like I'm undercover,
cross the bridge with dirty feet, dirtier heart.

Kayla Sargeson



Clairton Coke Works – Paula Martino

The Departure

It was the violet silk of morning.
The tree tops swaying
ink against black
at dawn.

The birds in the thickets,
their bodies disappearing
like fragments of light
into song.

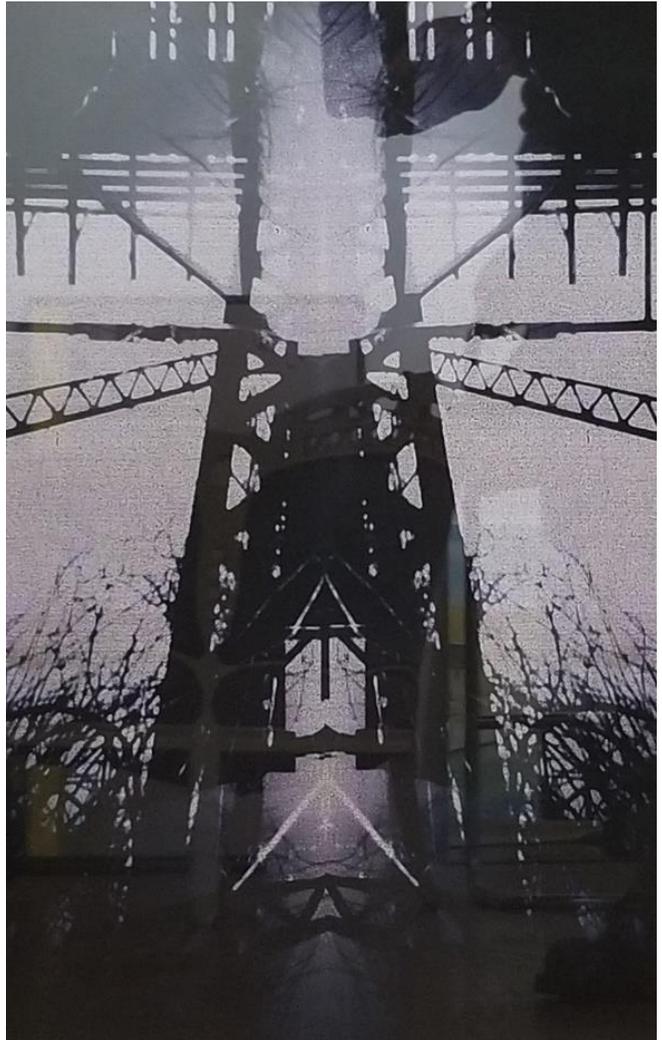
Say it was November
and the branches
were almost barren.

And the sound of the train
from a distance
unfastening the locks
like a drum of warning.

Maybe it was the weight
of the sky breaking
from the years that
we carried and scraped
as we dragged it along.

It is here then,
in the ruins
that you will yourself,
crossing pathless,
again.

Alyssa Sineni



Safe Travels – Tiffany Whitfield-DeCosmo

She is Sunken In

She is sunken in
Descending beneath the canopy
Discovering the floor where cast offs assemble
In the abscission planning a move

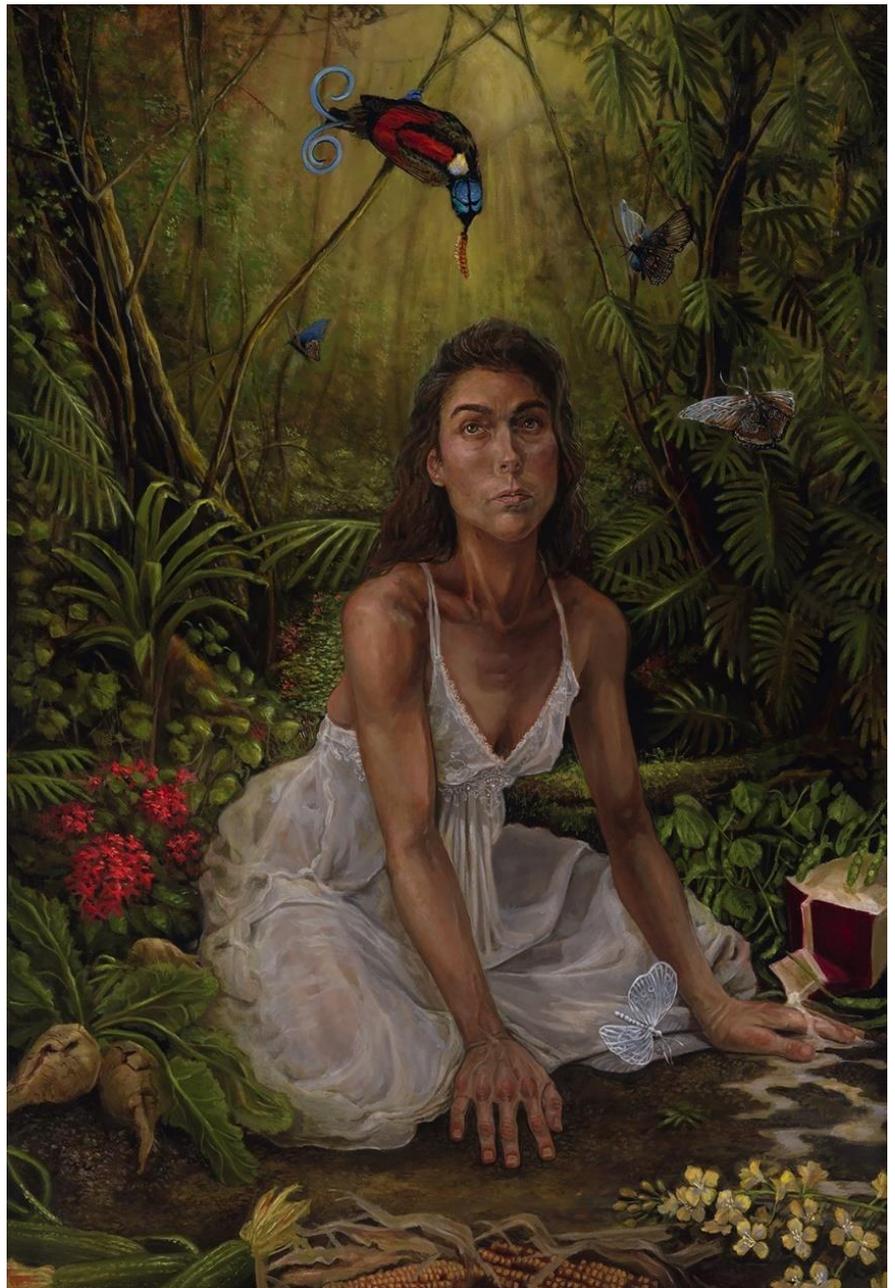
Here she assumes control
Arranging variables of temptation
Weighing values, setting store,
Putting nutrition below shape

A meal is grounds for disaster
Have a touch of rice paper
Unresponsive skin
Still all is not as it should be

Numbered folds of dressing gown
gathered to shrink from starlight
Hide from all comparisons
Her collapse is no admission

In time she becomes food
Found by the little ones
Hand to mouth, egg to larvae
But oh those discarded shells.

- **Chris Zapalo**



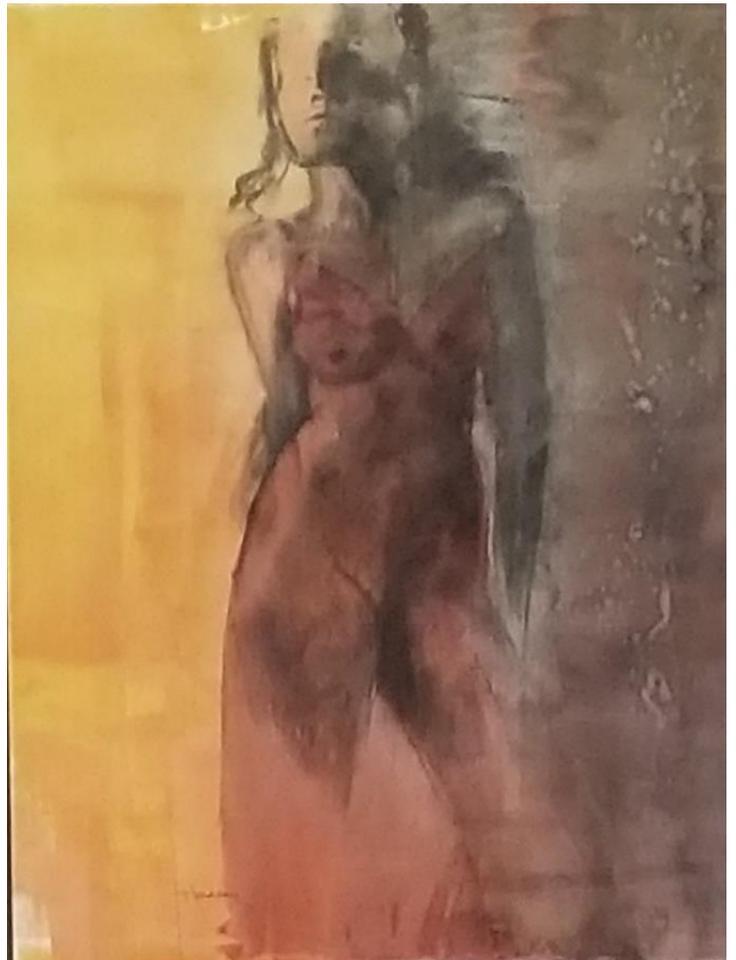
Transforming the Global
Smorgasbord of Disorder –
William Karaffa

Reflections

Had we the ability to look upon her feet,
we would understand the path she's taken,
don't mistake this kindness for weakness,
resurfacing from more pain than imaginable,
she hides strength,
beneath such a soft exterior,
she will play coy with her wit,
a favorite advantage,
waiting for others to underestimate,
those struggles made her indestructible,
some have rumored angelic properties,
yet, mark her and she will release a tsunami,
once upon approach,
making inquiries of her past,
these were the words she spoke:

From my view,
I've known Heaven,
seen it as the light blinded,
to one side,
I've known Hell,
to have been chained and binded,
cries rang out,
wanting to die young,
yet, I'm still standing tall,
there remains a skip to my step,
from now on out,
I'm bolder,
thankful to have someone,
holding my hand,
as I die,
many years from now,
and older.

Kathryn Zapalo



Woman – Mary Jane Hadley

Visions of War

The eyes,
like the faces I see in my dreams.

They have no names I can remember.

The eyes,
like windows reflect the pain
the wounds of war.

The eyes, like the faces.

They have no names I can remember.
On wounds I will never forget.

Kathleen Trew Swazuk



Eyes of the Crucifixion – Patricia Hill

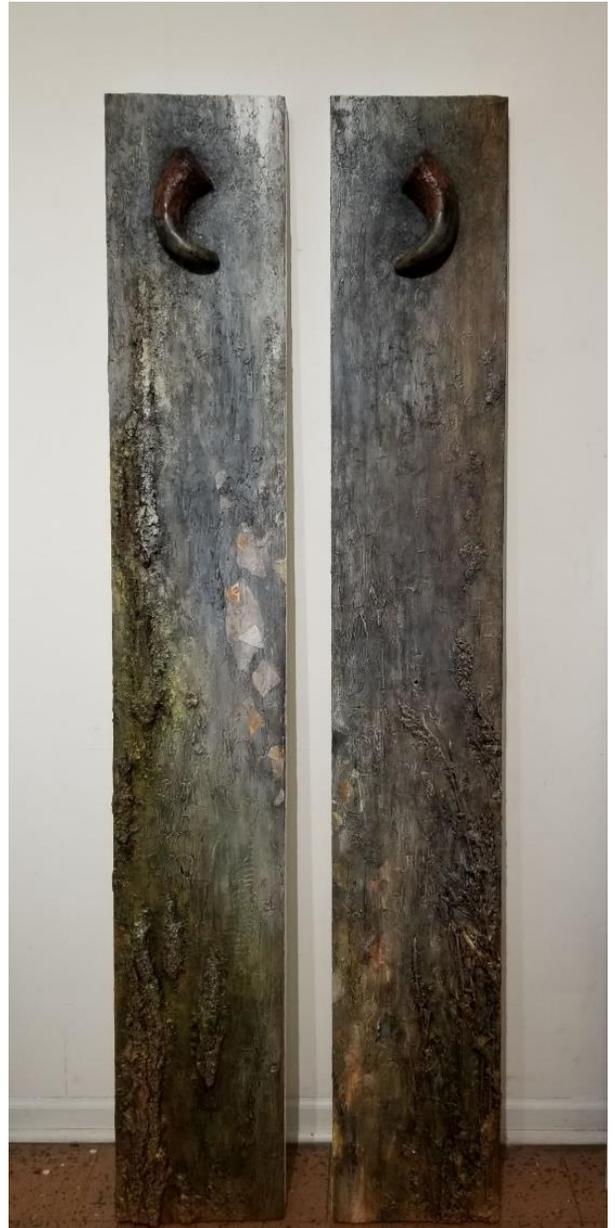
Choices

Grasp hold of the horn,
a quarter turn to the right,
push past the wildflowers of yesterday,
you will find an illuminated path,
in lies this, my Knight,
the truth you wish to seek.

Here marks the spot,
where the barks been rubbed clean,
newly worn velvet antlers finding release,
grasp hold of the horn,
a quarter turn to the left,
this is where the weary doe will find rest.

Regardless of your choice,
no matter the path you take,
you will know joy,
there will be sorrow,
sometimes even death will follow,
but it's not where we go,
it's not who we meet,
it's the scars on our hearts,
the blisters on our feet,
it's the way we take our pains,
mold them anew,
the choice is within,
how will you change their view?

Kathryn Zapalo



One Always Lies, And One Always Tells The Truth
– Tony Cavalline

Bridges

I'm driving to work one eyed again, and spinning
up my driveway, into another winter of craters,

and slow lanes, work truck lights spilling
into the black over the buck I just miss

down River Road. and whatever empty miracle
that's kept me here between double lines,

spilling coffee down my chin and neck,
veering into the lights from the semi

drifting into my lane. Sign says that this
is the last week for the McKeesport bridge,

and I can feel it in the shaking, decay of steel,
ripped drapes to catch the drift of paint, billowing

like an apparition. We have one more day of this,
but the workers are here, already airborne, strapped to cranes,

chained to girders and working in the hover and split air,
no faces, just the shadow of gesture in this morning dark.

Looking at them, I don't want to think I'm locked into this life,
to be counted among the fallen, but I've left the radio off,

because I want to hear that hawk again from yesterday,
lost, but singing away from this freezing sun.

I'm thinking of dinner at 6am, how you said you might want
to go out tonight and *what do I feel like?* But my mind keeps falling

back to the article I saw 30 years ago, taped to the toolbox
in my father's garage, yellowing, but intact of the 40th Street Bridge Tragedy.

10 year old victim, body recovered after drag racing accident, it said,
my father among the survivors. And I'm imagining him ten and invincible,

standing on the other side, wanting to do it again, lighting one up and laughing,
waiting for that last race, wondering who would win.

Bob Waliki



My Inner Spaces – Deborah Lieberman

The Garrulus

Due to new federal guidelines restricting the use of plastics,
We've chosen parts of *Rattus Norvegicus*
To form the necessary components assembled here.
The creature's hide forms the neck strap.
Fragments of the skull: the cone and rings.
The tubing that joins the two chambers is large intestine.
And so on... and so forth.

Conscientious objectors to this method of biological recycling
Would do well to remember that while many creatures suffer
Under the constraints imposed by our evolving environment,
Rattus Norvegicus continues to thrive.
Unlike, our poor friend the Garrulus here.

Chris Zapalo



Mojave Ozone Jay – Ben Matthews

Awakening

At the end of summer,
she cut the bright pigmented floral
in attempt to preserve the peace that
tethered her flat feet all spring and
summer to the wet earth
overrun with crabgrass
but the roads were salted in early
November, at the first sight of snow.

She began to fight with strangers at night
over parking spots on her urban
one-way street.
Large pickup trucks parked carelessly,
occupying two potential spots,
but she refused to use plastic patio chairs to
reserve her space,
it was too early, still fall.

The anthocyanin pigments in
violets, daisies, hydrangeas,
roses, and marigolds lost their
bright yellow, purple, red, and blues
in the thick black book she
tucked away and they
became colorless and brittle.

Waves of snow came for months
but the violently bright floral remained a
vivid explosion of petals and stems,
as she remembered all the seeds she had saved
and the cone flowers and the other perennials
asleep in the soil,
ready to wake
come spring.

Deena November



The Edge of an Awakening –
Stacey Pvdvinkowski

After His Death, I Eat a Hotdog with Dad

My hands
Rest on the cool surface of a grey, metal counter
And thoughts of my father
Roll into my mind like
The little waves that crash on the beach outside that hotdog stand
As I buy a snack that touches
My childhood.
On the boardwalk, the stores and food shops
Stare out over the water
Dad strolls down the wooden planks beside me
Looking for a break from the afternoon sun
He laughs
And reaches in his pocket to pull out some change.
While clouds dot the shiny blue sky
Music and colors and summer smells
He goes to a window to order the treat
And I remember him
Smiling.
A little girl and a happy man with his daughter
Both together on a sunny afternoon
I close my eyes and I see us.
The little girl is me, so many years ago
The man is my dad.
“Mary,” Dad chuckles.
“Wanna hotdog?”
A tired fast-food clerk prepares our cheap meal
And I watch Dad’s big hands squirt some ketchup on my treasure
The afternoon’s feast.
I chew and gaze up at him on that day
Staying close by so I don’t get lost
And so content that he is there.
Those summer days are
Taken for granted
Until they slip away and
It is too late.
Summer afternoons will never be the same.
I want to run to that place where we ate
To the same shop decorated with orange towels, dark-glasses and funny t-shirts
I want to hold my dad’s hand
And munch on my snack
And listen to crackling radios play from the beach blankets
Now, as I meander down that old, worn walkway again
We are all together again in my dreams;
I smile and recall those warm vacation days.
I think of that afternoon
And, even after his death
I eat a hotdog with my father.



Wall – Ellen Chisdes Neuberg

Commemorating

Such a pity you missed it,
thought you ought to have seen it,

felt the raw emotions, souls converging to a singular path,
desires, dreams, lingering memories, poured out through ink and oil,

coming together to perform miracles, each outstretched hand, linking with another,

we did it, because we did it together,
reigniting the flame of community.

Kathryn Lynn Zapalo