



Poets Artists

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Cover by Alex Russell Flint



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by Grady Harp



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Photo Credit: Maeghan Donohue

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Natasha Trethewey

Interview with Grace Cavalieri

Grace

I want to know something, Natasha. How did you learn you were going to be Poet Laureate, and when did this happen?

Natasha

It happened on May 7. Dr. Billington, the Librarian of Congress called me at home; and I saw on my caller ID, “Library of Congress,” and I thought, what can that be?

Grace

They want me to give a reading!

Natasha

You know I’d been invited to the book festival before, so certainly it could have been something like that. I had a new book coming out, so it would have made sense. But I answered the phone, and he introduced himself over the phone, and then asked me if I would serve as the Poet Laureate, and I was thrilled.

Grace

Hmmm...And what was your answer?

Natasha

I said....

Grace

Now let me think...I’m not sure if I want to.

Natasha

Well, first of all I asked if he was joking, if this was a joke. I said, “Really, Dr. Billington, it’s you?”

Grace

When you came out on stage at the Library of Congress, the entire audience stood up. I thought, a standing ovation before she reads? And then a standing ovation after! And you are two Laureates at once. Are you going to visit Mississippi?

Natasha

I’m going to Mississippi next week, as a matter of fact.

Grace

And I understand you’re going to really take up residence at The Library of Congress?

Natasha

That’s right. Moving here in January, and get to spend that half of my term, through June, here.

POETSARTISTS

Natasha Trethewey is the nineteenth Poet Laureate of the United States. She was born in Gulfport, Mississippi. She’s the author of five poetry collections, and a book of prose. Her honors include the Pulitzer Prize, fellowships from the Guggenheim, the National Endowment for the arts, and she is presently the state Poet Laureate for Mississippi. She’s also professor of English and creative writing, at Emory University.

Image © Matt Valentine 2008



An excerpt from Help, 1968 (Thrall, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012)

last stanza:

when my mother took me for walks,
she was mistaken again and again
for my maid. Years later she told me
she’d say I was her daughter, and each time
strangers would stare in disbelief, then
empty the change from their pockets. Now

I think of the betrayals of flesh, how
she must have tried to make of her face
an inscrutable mask and hold it there
as they made their small offerings—
pressing coins into my hands. How
like the woman in the photograph
she must have seemed, carrying me
each day—white in her arms—as if
she were a prop; a black backdrop,
the dark foil in this American story.

Natasha Trethewey

Interview with Grace Cavalieri continued

Grace

And not since we've had poetry consultants, since Congress legislated that term as Laureate, has anyone occupied that office.

Natasha

That's right.

Grace

What made you do that?

Natasha

Well, I think I really wanted to start off my term by being in residence, so that I might meet with the public here at the library; this most wonderful public space of our nation. And I also have fond memories of working on my last collection of poems, *Native Guard*, in the reading room of the library; doing research in the archives, and then doing the poems - writing, studying, thinking - in the lovely reading room. I wanted to get some of that back. This is a very inspiring place for me.

Grace

The idea of poetry equaling service... and you're known for that. So you're bringing public service to our capital. And I think you're going to get a lot of phone calls.

Natasha

I bet. I hope so.

Grace

As I have been following your work, I notice not only the prominent father figure, which is a constant thread, but the triad, which we in your poems. The triad of the mother, daughter, and father— the triangle; this is very important. But, in a triangle, there's always an odd man out. So that adds a dramatic tension. There's always someone off stage in your poetry, and I find that gives it a lot of suspense. I was thinking of how important the father figure is, in literature, from the beginning of time, and how that's throughout your mythology. How important is to your work?

Natasha

Well you know Grace, it was interesting when you said, about the triangle; and how sometimes someone's sort of outside of that. There may be the two that are highlighted, and the third is left behind. My last book was very much about my mother. There are many elegies to my mother in *Native Guard*. And I can remember sometimes Q and A's I would have with the audience afterwards, and people would ask me, well don't you ever write about your father? And he had made an appearance in my first book in some ways, but probably that absent part of the triangle that you mentioned. So, this new book very much dedicated to him, and about him.

Grace

And what is the title?

Natasha

The book is called *Thrall*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt brought this out.

Grace

I don't think we can estimate how important it is to write poetry to find out who we are. I think that that sounds very self-absorbed, but it's not. It's the opposite, isn't it? To know who we are in the world, and to puzzle that out; and what you do, I realized this more in watching you than in reading you, is that you find the fiercest truth possible, and then the best possible language to parry that; to get the truth out. But you start with the deepest truth.

Natasha

I think I start with the deepest truths which are for me often historical truths. I am of course, as you say, interested in investigating the self, and making sense my place in the world. And it seems to me the only way to do it is to make sense of my place in the continuum of history. What are those things that happened in the past that have everything to do with this moment, and me in it.

Grace

And I feel that partly the choice, in addition to your poetry, the reason you're our Laureate is because of your scholarship. Because it is really such a contribution to have the poem reflected in great works of art; in historical moments. And that is what you are known for.

Natasha

Well poetry is exciting to me because it's about discovery; and of course so is doing research. And they naturally go together for me.

Grace

Why was the word "ruthless" in your poem about your father: "Elegy?" Why? The word ruthless was such a pristine choice of words, and it has a power in that poem. Why ruthless?

Natasha

Well, you know that's the first poem in the book, and I wanted to set up immediately the sense that I am making poems, not only about public history, but also about personal history. And in that way, telling the details of aspects of my relationship with my father; with my mother; and I think it does take a kind of ruthlessness to be willing to make of those things, art.

Grace

You're at Emory now. And you were the Lehman Brady joint chair professor of documentary in American studies at Duke University and the University of North Carolina.

Natasha Trethewey

Interview with Grace Cavalieri continued

Natasha

That's right.

Grace

Both at once?

Natasha

Yes.

Grace

Okay. Then you served as the James Weldon Johnson fellow in African American studies at Yale, Beinecke Library.

Natasha

Yes

Grace

Couldn't you hold a job? What is it with you, Natasha?

Natasha

The whole time that I was taking those posts, I was actually an Emory professor. So they're just visiting professorships.

Grace

I have to mention your prose, because I really believe that it's important for a poet to be able to write prose. And *Beyond Katrina* was such a different book from any other book about that disaster, because of your approach. Can you tell us, first of all, why *beyond Katrina*, not *after Katrina*? That word is such a poet's word.

Natasha

Well, because the book wasn't simply about the aftermath of Katrina. It was beyond both into the past, and into the future. What the, sort of, making of my hometown was that led up to that moment of the storm and its aftermath. And then a projection; a kind of meditation into the future about what Katrina is going to mean in the rebuilding and recovery efforts in people's lives for many years to come.

Grace

Give us a little taste of some of the historical detail that you use in your work. So, it could be, ekphrasis? Is that the word? Tell us about that word.

Natasha

Well, an ekphrastic poem, is of course, just a poem about a work of art. And I refer constantly in my work to other works of art; to be in conversation with them.

Grace

Are you an art historian?

Natasha

I am not. But I've had to study enough in order to understand something about the iconography of paintings.

Grace

It's clear in your work that you really know a lot about art; in all of your books.

Natasha

Well that's another fun part, as I said, about doing research and writing poems

Grace

Your poetry does not try to persuade us, or give us a polemical idea of how things should be; even though the poet stands between us and society, which is a pretty big bridge. But yet, it does persuade us. Can you explain that awareness, and how that happens?

Natasha

I've thought about that a lot; and I want to make use of imagery in poems to show a vision of the world. And of course it is as I see it. But I want to present it in the poems in such a way that you might see it also; that might persuade you. And so, the image is the thing that does the work of argument for me.

Grace

The work of argument; that's going to be a good title for an essay

Natasha

You know, when I work on poems, I end up memorizing them so that I can work on them anytime, anywhere, without the pages in front of me. So often I am just reciting.

Grace

If history is something that we agree on, we'd make an agreement that your poetry is what history is.

Natasha

We agree that things happened in the past.

Natasha Trethewey

Interview with Grace Cavalieri continued

Grace

Exactly. And you are changing the agreement in your poetry. You're saying, wait a minute; this is not my history. I have another take on this. That's a big contribution.

Natasha

Well I think that often we are in contention about history. I mean, there are perhaps documentary evidence we can use to make sense of the facts. But there are always interpretations that people add to those facts; what a particular thing meant at a given moment. And so, I am looking a little bit slant at certain kinds of histories, because certain things have been left out occasionally. There are erasures that are based on both unintentional and willed forgetting.

Grace

How do you see your poems changed in this book from previous work?

Natasha

There were many poems in traditional forms in my last book, and I was trying to break out of form a little bit in this book; to release myself; to have a different kind of freedom with the line.

Grace

Form is just the way we hold our art. And form is the way we hold the tumult inside us, right?

Natasha

I started looking at Mexican Casta paintings. These are paintings in colonial Mexico across the entire eighteenth century that represented the mixed blood unions that were taking place. And you know, when I first started looking at them, I was obviously fascinated by them, because they represented the mixed blood offspring of the different parents, and the taxonomies; the names created to name the different blood mixtures. And I didn't really know that I was looking in many ways at images of my own family. But of course that's, I'm certain, why I was compelled to look at them in the first place.

Grace

They're very formal, aren't they?

Natasha

Yes, they're very beautiful constructions. They painted them, and often different painters created the exact same scenes, and so you would see different skill levels by the different painters. And so I use a very beautiful sequence of them by Juan Rodriguez Juarez, which are circa 1715. I was just going to also say that, what the Book of Castas is; if you were born a mixed blood in colonial

Mexico, your name and taxonomy would be recorded in the Book of Castas. So this is how they kept a record of the mixed blood people who were born.

Grace

And what does taxonomy actually mean?

Natasha

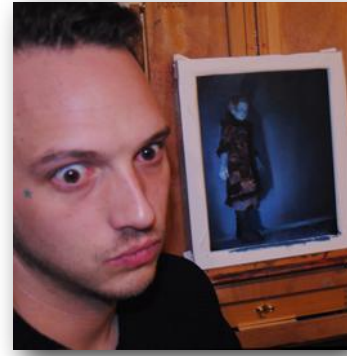
It is just, when you think about even plants, the various names of blood mixtures. So for example, they believed that indigenous blood, indian blood, over a few generations of mixing with white blood, could be purified to whiteness; but that the taint of African blood was irreversible. So you had names like, "Mulato Turning Backwards," "Hold Yourself in Midair," and "I Don't Understand You."

Grace

Natasha Trethewey is the nineteenth Poet Laureate of the United States and we are glad.

Grace Cavalieri is planning a trip to South Carolina where the 5th graders in the low lands are studying her play **QUILTING THE SUN** as part of their curriculum (Slavery, Quilting, post Civil War.) They saw the play performed professionally last year and this year will create their own work, with Cavalieri taking them on the journey. However, Grace wrongly made reservations to Augusta instead of Savannah to get to Beaufort; so she should stick to creative writing and leave

Jonny Hart



Jonny Hart was born and raised in Los Angeles California, where he studied drawing and painting at the Los Academy of Figurative Art, and is currently pursuing his MFA at the New York Academy of Art. He has exhibited in various galleries in the Los Angeles area, and is a founding member of the LA based art collective known as 'em.bod.y'. His work will be appearing as part of the group show "figured out" at Q Art Salon in the LA/OC area, featuring work by fellow em.bod.y artist Eric Pedersen, Johnpaul Freedom, Sean Cheetham, and others.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

My work embodies a selection of the thoughts, experiences, and lines of inquiry I've had over the last year and a half or so. I treat these pieces a bit like my visual journals. Each one represents roughly 3 or 4 months of my life, and they feel to me like museums for my memories. I'm trying to compose my life the way I want to remember it. There's no formula to how these elements coalesce into a finished piece, and I like it that way.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Jonny Hart was born and raised in Los Angeles California, where he has lived and died several times. He is now living and painting in New York. Currently, very much alive.

Gemini 1 2011 oil on canvas mounted on panel 36"x48"



For Mad-Men Only 2012 charcoal on paper mounted on panel 11"x 22"



Feedback Loop 2012 charcoal on paper, 17"x24"



Daniela Petrova

Homeland

When did you turn into such an American?
Mother asks when I return
for my annual summer pilgrimage.

A baby goat lays slaughtered in my honor
by the old stone and mud house
in the mountains
where houses cling to the steep slopes
like some wretched crows
in the branches of the old walnut tree
under which we ate lunch in the summers
when my grandfather put down the hoe
and my uncle came back with the goats.

Back when I climbed the walnut tree
and swung off its branches
and didn't mind the outhouse
up the narrow path
where instead of toilet paper
old newspapers hung on a rusty nail.
Back when I helped Grandma bake bread
in the wood stove,
and in school
I wore the red Young Pioneers scarf.
Back when I hadn't even heard
of the skyscrapers and highways
in that place far away
that will bewitch me years later
from the small black and white screen

that Mother covered with an embroidered cloth
to keep the dust away.

The walnut tree has long dried out
and my grandparents' hands
are brown and knotted
like its roots,
and the house smells of rot
and old Communist books.
The outhouse buzzes with flies
and I am upset
about a dead baby goat.
Guilt greases my fingers
when I try to eat it.

When did I turn into such an American?

I bring presents,
cheap stuff from Chinatown
a wristwatch for Grandpa and
a fake Armani shirt for my uncle,
who's back with the goats,
and I'm ashamed
because he thinks its real.

I tightrope walk
between two continents
and the sea in between
only grows wider
and I no longer know
where home is.

I worked hard in America.
I cleaned Fifth Avenue apartments
whose owners forgot to pay me,
and at night, at the 92 Street Y,
I studied English
across from a Swedish au pair
and a Russian PhD historian.
I learned to do small talk
and smile at strangers.
But I will always be the girl at the party
everyone asks: "Where you from?"

Back where I am from,
the cafés are choked in cigarette smoke
and along the highways
girls stand in miniskirts
like spring flowers
sprouting from the trash.
And my old friends
who used to gather in the city squares
shouting, "Down with the Reds,
we want democracy,"
flaunt their latest model cell phones.

And my uncle says
he wants to be buried
in his Armani shirt.

Daniela Petrova

Comrade God

I grew up fearless of you.
Free of you. Empty of you.
You, my schoolbook said,
were nothing but an invention
to keep the masses at bay.

In New York City decades later
under a crescent moon unmoved
aches unarticulated
dreams undone
I gaze into a neon void
and whisper your name.

Fear has many faces
and the honey voice of copper

(mine tastes of cigarettes and semi-dark chocolate).

I abandon myself to oblivion.
I gorge on stupor sprinkled with nothingness.
But I long to believe
and belief is what I ask for:

Comrade God,
please give me faith.

After the Wall

Skinheads
Junkies
Mafia
Children in rags
beg on the streets
Old people with canes
dig into garbage bins
Hookers in miniskirts grow
like weeds
by the roads
outside the cities.
McDonalds
Dunkin Donuts
Starbucks—
we've got it all.

Freedom, says the crow,
perched on the shoulder of the beheaded Lenin's
statue,
is plain old Capitalism
cloaked in the robes of Democracy.

Because there was no God

and there was no competition
and no motivation to work

because Money was Evil
and the Party was King

because they pretended to pay us
and we pretended to work

because we were all equal
—equally terrified of Durzhavna Sigurnost

because we hunted Levi's jeans
and fought at grocery stores for bananas

and there was something about Freedom of Speech
and Free Market

but I was just a kid
standing guard by Brezhnev's bust in school
hand raised, thumb folded,
the Young Pioneer's scarf flaming around my neck



Daniela Petrova grew up in Communist Bulgaria. She splits her time between New York City and Cape Cod. She is a 2012 Massachusetts Cultural Council Artist Fellow. Her poems, essays, and short stories have appeared in magazines, newspapers, and anthologies, including *Best New Writing 2008* (Hopewell Publications, 2008), *Marie Claire*, *The Chaffin Journal*, and the *Portland Review*. She is currently working on a novel.

Stefania Fersini

www.stefaniafersini.com

Stefania Fersini (1982) is an Italian artist. She studied Product Design and later became part of Nucleo, a collective studio of artists and designers based in Torino, Italy. Her designs have been exhibited worldwide over the past eight years: in Italy (Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 2009), France (Galerie Italienne, Paris), Belgium (Pierre Berge and Associates, Brussels, 2008), Germany (Gabrielle Ammann Gallery, Koln), and in art and design fairs: Design Miami Basel, PAD Paris, PAD London.

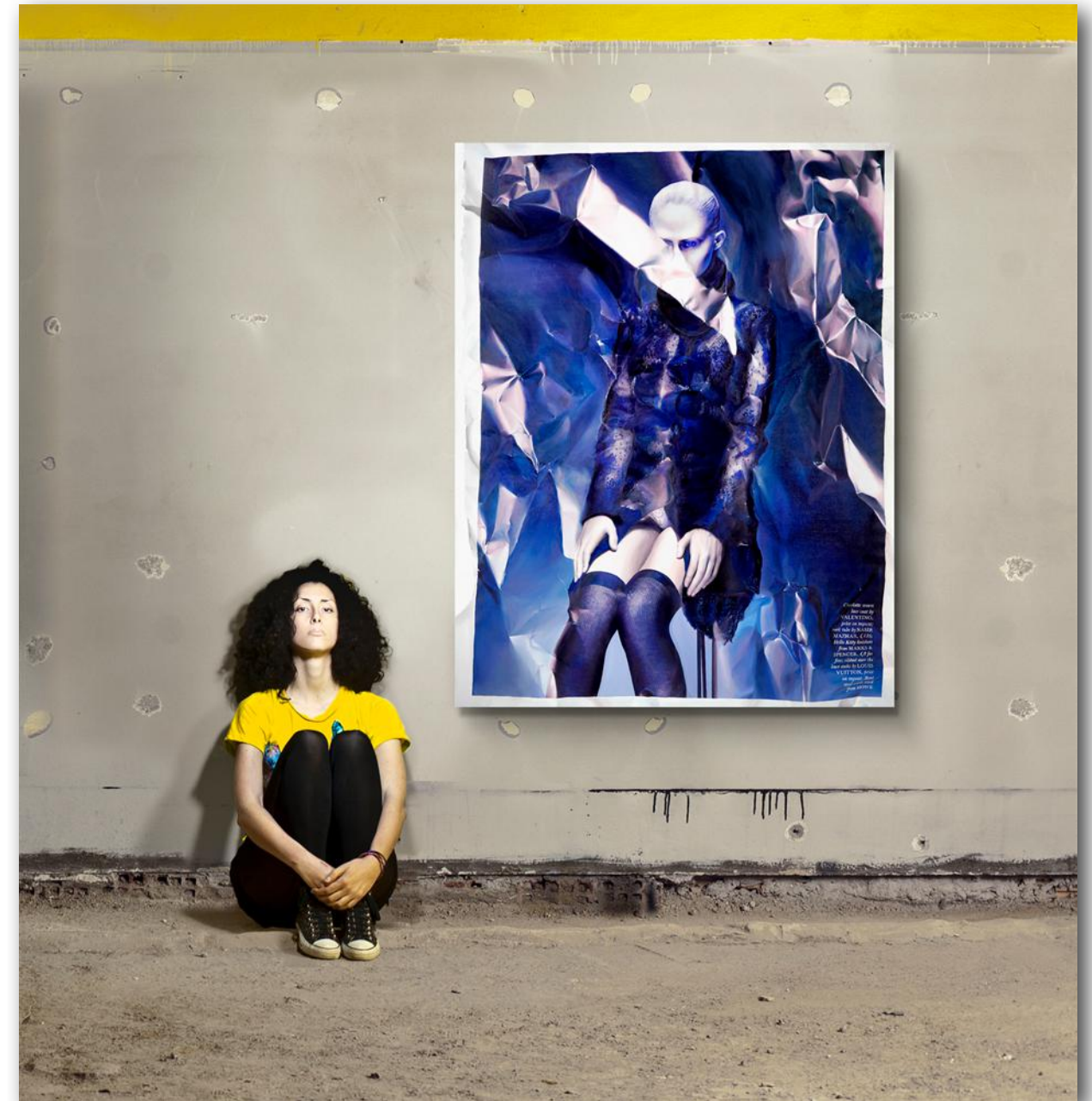
Last year she has started a personal artistic project; painting. Her work has been recognized by contemporary art figures. Selected for the Salon Art Prize and exhibited at Matt Roberts Gallery in London, her paintings were also shown in Italy at ArtVerona fair and The Others fair (Torino) by Galleria Numero 38, Lucca, Italy. She has been published in trendland.com, ffffound.com, trendhunter.com, and artistaday.com

Erin Fox wrote about her: "The photorealistic painting series by Stefania Fersini is an amazing example of intricate artwork, which breeds talent and imagination. The idea of painting crumpled magazine pictures is a great way to demonstrate the artistic appeal of fashion editorials in an obscure nature. The softened nature of each painting adds a great amount of interpretation for emotions."

ARTISTIC PROCESS

In my paintings, the enlarged fashion pages bring the real scale of the characters and the scene in the foreground, creating a parallel world made of models, scenarios, icons of our society. I identify with these as a reflection of myself. In fact, the women in these images always mirrors something about me. In "Wonderland november-december 2011" the "closed" pose of the woman and the clothing full of texture and details, show a conservative education. In contrast with this, the violence of her gaze and the fluorescent damaged hair unfold a will of revolt. On the other hand "ID spring summer 2012 page 162" is the representation of a Barbie. Like a puppet, the model is forced to stay in a surreal and unnatural posture in which appears both as a housewife, a femme fatale and a housekeeper. In "LOVE n06 autumn winter 2011" the provocation of the lace dress and the long socks, hides a rigid body in an educated pose that naively reveals a hello kitty's panty. The deformation and reflection on the face turns her into a sad clown, protagonist of a circus, she doesn't want to be part of. Magazine pages picked from recycled bins, with their twists and reflections, divert the attention away from the scene. Together with the captions, they represent Consumerism and Appearance, that are the values and myths of today's society.

Therefore, the contrast between the depth of the scene and the surface of coated paper alternate producing a continuous change of perception. This has an hypnotic effect that allows the observer to switch from conscious to subconscious and induces a personal reflection about the complexity of individuality in relation to these same models and values. My hand disappears behind the precision of the brushstrokes. Intentionally impersonal, my presence confirms my will to be the means, a mirror, everywhere but nowhere at the same time.



**I'm fed up of going fast, tired of the excesses and superficiality.
I need to paint to slow down.
I take time off,
to meditate, to fast from what is too much
to contemplate Beauty, where there is some.
I copy because the solution to excess is not to create "new".
I copy like a mirror, because reflection is my choice.**

LOVE n08 autumn winter 2012 oil on canvas 39.4 x 31.5 inches



LOVE n06 autumn winter 2011 2012 oil on linen, 59 x 47.2 inches





Eric White

www.ewhite.com



Eric White (b. Ann Arbor, MI, 1968) received his BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1990, and has shown extensively in galleries and museums around the world. Relying heavily on the dream-state, metaphysics, and 1940s era Hollywood for inspiration, White examines the boundaries of human perception in conceptually complex and expertly rendered oil paintings. He has served as adjunct professor at The School of Visual Arts in New York City since 2006. In 2010 White received a Painting Fellowship from The New York Foundation for the Arts. In 2009 he participated in the charitable group exhibition STAGES (which premiered in Paris and traveled to Miami and New York) to benefit the

LIVESTRONG Cancer Foundation. A collection of his work, "It Feeds Itself," was published in 2003, followed by a book based on his solo exhibition "Who Are Parents?" in 2005. He currently lives and works in New York City.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

I'm currently working on a new series which references car scenes from film. Both of my grandfathers worked in the auto industry on opposite ends of it's spectrum during Detroit's heyday, so on some level all of that has to be imprinted in me somewhere. Within the confines of the car interior I'm using repetition and mirroring to convey the passage of time and to symbolize the varying degrees of intimacy and connection and depth in interpersonal and/or romantic relationships. I work to create a space that appears believable but is physically impossible. I collect and/or shoot reference images, manipulate & collage them in photoshop, hand transfer the sketch to the canvas using the grid method, and paint the composition in oil.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I am fascinated by the idea that our reality is a dream and that something greater exists beyond our perception; that time is not linear and realities overlap. Whether it be physicist David Bohm's postulations that the universe is in essence a holographic projection, or Jane Roberts' channeled metaphysical works, like The Nature of Personal Reality, which claim that everything we experience is self-generated illusion, these ideas are very compelling to me, and they are central to my work.



1963 Plymouth Belvedere (Rosemary's Baby) 2012

oil on linen

36 x 36 inches



1960 Sunbeam Alpine Sport Series 1 (Butterfield 8) 2012 oil on linen 24 x 24 inches



1974 Mercedes-Benz
450 SL (Annie Hall)
2011
oil on linen
48 x 48 inches



1973 Ford Pinto with Tanguy Sky (3 Women) 2011 oil on canvas 40 x 60 inches

Michelle McEwen



Michelle McEwen, poet/storyteller and author of *Delicious Dangerous* (a poetry chapbook published for the *MiPOesias* Chapbook series in 2010), has had work published in numerous online and print journals including: *PoetsArtists*, *Umbrella Journal*, *Big City Lit*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Naugatuck River Review*, and in the anthologies: *The Best New Poets 2007* and *Woman's Work* (a short story anthology). When she isn't busy writing, she's busy reading, running, and raising her two sons Zion and Justice.

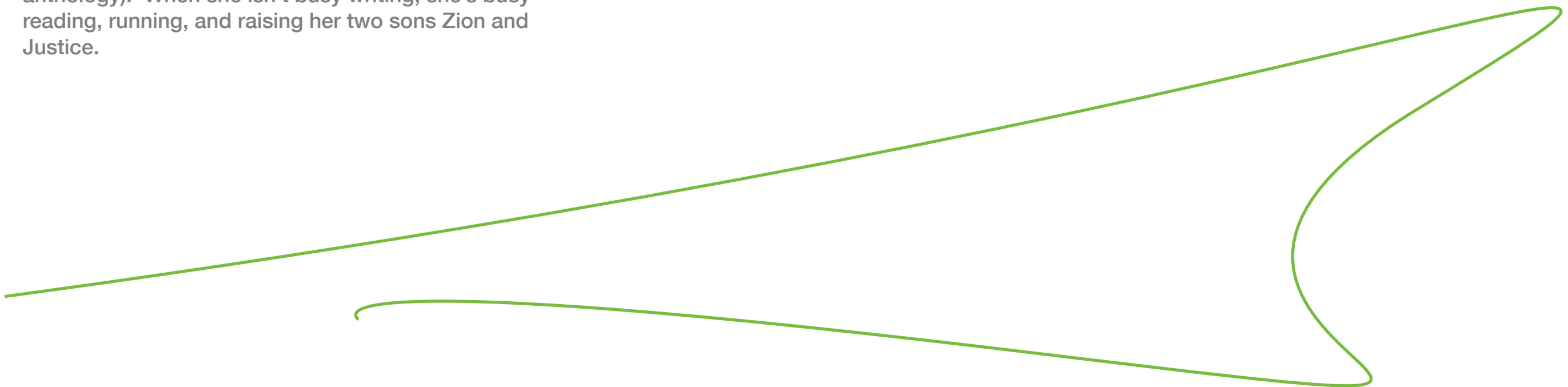
We are found in Poetry Book Titles (a love poem)

Me sweetwater, saltwater
 Me carnival evening
 Me queen of the rain country
 Me firstborn
 Me Marilyn Monroe
 Me autumn wind
 Me autumn blues
 Me weeds and woodsmoke
 Me borrowed scenery
 Me tree tall woman
 Me fast speaking woman
 Me cotton candy on a rainy day
 Me big-eyed, afraid
 Me like the singing coming off of drums

He born of a woman
 He wild life rifle fire
 He copacetic
 He taboo
 He smoking lovely
 He talking dirty to the gods

He the secret meaning of things
 He sweet machine
 He definition of a place
 He Africa, Paris, Greece
 He New Hampshire
 He one-way ticket
 He muscular music
 He the song turning back into itself

We poetic magnetic
 We legs, hips, behind
 We good times
 We scrambled eggs & whiskey
 We between ourselves
 We spring and all
 We blues baby
 We open eye, open heart
 We mad river
 We back roads to far places
 We ravenous
 We history
 We an unfinished story
 We dancing



Alex Russell Flint

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www.poetsandartists.com

Alex Russell Flint (b 1974) is a British artist who produces beautifully executed, soulful oil paintings. A 'Contemporary Realist' his pictures have been described as 'the perfect mix of modernity and tradition'. ARF divides his time between London and Argenton-Chateau in France, where he lives and works in the rambling former school house he acquired in 2010. He studied for many years under the renowned teacher Ted Jacobs at Ecole Albert Defois, Jacobs' atelier in the Loire Valley, where he was extensively trained from life in his unique approach known as 'Restructured Realism'. He is the great grandson of the watercolorist Sir William Russell Flint.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

My figurative work is done from a combination of sketches and color notes taken from life, along with photographic references. I begin most of these projects with a fairly strong idea of the feeling I want it to convey, rather than a fixed idea of what it will ultimately look like. I begin by taking a lot of snaps of a model in various rooms, in a variety of poses. Slowly decisions are made, objects added or removed, clothes changed, hair/make up styled and the final image found. After copious studies, I will then draw out the image, do a full tonal underpainting in diluted oil paint (known as a 'color wash') and then a thicker final layer thinned with medium rather turps. I love being outside and balancing the many hours of inside projects by going out and making small landscape studies en plein air.

ARTIST STATEMENT

ARF's paintings are mostly informed by his surroundings in rural France and often focus on the interiors of his home and the female form within it. His palette is unostentatious, quietly nuanced and his mastery of tonal and chromatic gradations serve as a vehicle to express the combination of solidity and sensitivity, materiality, and emotions. Unashamedly beautiful, his paintings never descend to a superficial prettiness. His control of the so-called formal elements - composition, modeling, color harmonies, linear movements together endow his forms with a discreet strength. ARF's art expresses a quiet, visual poetry that transcend time, date and location.



Alex Russell Flint
www.alexrussellflint.com

Danni with chinese hat oil on canvas panel 31 x 40 cm



Olivia Sitting oil on canvas panel 73 x 92 cm



Alex Russell Flint

Magda in fur collar oil on canvas panel 140 x 100cm





The Rat Catcher II Charcoal on paper 73 x 100 cm

Alex Russell Flint

Andrew Demcak

www.andrewdemcak.com

www.poetsandartists.com



Andrew Demcak is an award-winning poet and novelist. His debut novel, *If There's a Heaven Above* (JMS Books, 2013) is forthcoming. He is currently working on two new poetry collections.

POETSARTISTS

Synopsis

Our narrator's morning starts at zero.
His aesthetic composed,
the whip cord of a Prada bathrobe.

Anti-hero,
the counterpoint dance of metaphysics.
The plot returns with his vague depression.

His taste centralized, an ascetic's.
And shadows.
Some secret masturbator.

Then the tiresome gun,
an obsession.
This end: the knowing eye of his father.

Sometimes A Cry Will Rise Up To Meet You

Baghdad's Sadr City slum: two fine men, barefoot and careless.
Their lips naked, their shadows smoothly intertwining.

Lovers denounced, hunted.
A Shiite soldier's gun knows its directions.

They're whole targets, the blind meat.
What matters but honor?

Both men shot cold, both local, made in the same tribal hearth.
Signs left on each chest: "Pervert" in Arabic.

Give them their lost birthrights.
Their corpses dumped with the pumpkin rinds.

Jaime Valero

www.jaimevalero.net

www.poetsandartists.com

Jaime Valero (1967) was born in Madrid, Spain. Graduated from the Fine Art School at Complutense University in Madrid in 1985. After receiving his Bachelor's Degree, he taught art and drawing for six years. He started working as a full-time artist in 1996. Since then he has been building his own style and imagery, primary focused on portraiture and figures.

While living in the USA for years (2001-2003) he began investigating the possibilities of large-scale portraits and nudes in water and since then he has dedicated most of his art to larger scale work.

In the past few months he began a new project through the internet sharing his process and procedure. Up to date, he has created three different videos, in English and Spanish, and opened his studio and its secrets. ("Come In and Help Yourself Project").

ARTISTIC PROCESS

The older I get the more I appreciate those special pieces of art that invite you to imagine, interpret or guess what is going on. I feel uncomfortable when everything is given to me, when there is nothing left for me to investigate.

I'd rather suggest than show. Even though someone could think my pieces are too finished to pretend this, the essence is not in the formal process but what we offer through that image.

I open doors for the viewers to go through and find out by themselves. The bodies, faces or places I create try to suggest possibilities, stories behind the surface. I want my images to capture attention at first sight and then, leave them with their own conclusions.

I am a big admirer of the great classics and the cutting edge contemporary art. I would like to be able to put together the magic and living atmosphere from Velazquez's paintings with Antonio López's, Viola's or Richter's contemporary approaches.



www.poetsandartists.com



Misty oil on board 32 x 40 inches



Water and Skin Series oil on board 29 x 24 inches



Night Lights
oil on board
33 x 70 inches

Jaime Valero

www.poetsandartists.com



Silence oil on board 47x72 inches

Timothy Brainard

www.poetsandartists.com



Timothy Brainard has recently published his first book of collected works entitled, *A Lion Roars in the Western Sky (The Poems)*. He maintains a blog at timbrainard.com

Words Fall To Ash Between The Two Walls Of My Room

15 minutes never lasted so many days
i went for a long walk between the
two walls of my room, paced from
one to the other

6-1/2 hours never lasted so many years
last night and i couldn't span the gap
i couldn't sleep or dream so just lay
there imagining

5 or 6 twisted versions of myself, none of
which seemed too unbelievable, all of
which felt too real, too close to home
i got up at

4:23 a.m. for a drink of water and to piss
i went for a long walk between the
two walls of my room, paced from
one to the other and

15 minutes never lasted so many days
i got angry, really angry, and threw
a pair of socks at the wall. i am such
a tamed-down

1-piece version of myself, i hate it! it's me
i hate me. i'm a coward and a liar and
a fraud on all counts: i don't know
how to change

100's of poems and 10's of thousands of
words: i know how to talk about
change, but i know nothing, just
nothing.

6 days ago today the world was altogether
different: in only 6 days my whole
world fell to ash, and i know why
and in only

6 days more the world will be altogether
different again: in only 6 days the
whole world will be on fire and i
just don't know. when

15 minutes lasts so many days of time
and i am so many voices, none of
them kind, i am not afraid, but i
know i won't miss it.





Originally from St Louis, Missouri, Leslie Nichols is a traditionally trained painter whose work combines text with image in various ways to create mixed-media landscapes and portraits. Her work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in galleries throughout the United States including the Huntsville Museum of Art in Alabama, the Carnegie Center for Visual and Performing Arts in Covington, Kentucky, and the A.D Gallery at University of North Carolina Pembroke. Her work is in public and private collections in the United States and abroad, including H&R Block's World Headquarters, Liquitex, Harlaxton College, John Brown University and Arkansas State University. Nichols has been awarded the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant for Painting, an AAUW Career Development Grant, and an Artist Enrichment Grant from the Kentucky Foundation for Women. Her artist residencies include the Vermont Studio Center, Hopscotch House, and Can Serrat.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

I appropriated historical feminist texts and used a manual typewriter to create intimately scaled images of contemporary women. Encounters, either brief or prolonged, with individual women provided me a connection to a text related to the sitter's concerns or persona. The title of each work references the sitter's name as well as the author and date of the text used to create the image: Sitter (Text Author, Text Date).

I find interest in using the typewriter, an early tool of the secretary, to craft images with these texts about women. Since the typewriter's origins as a tool to print manuscripts in the late 1800s, people have used it to

create works of art. For me, the inclusion of text in portraits alludes to the idea that our lives are the creations of our minds; how we identify ourselves and label others is in part a product of social construction. I hope my works add something unique to the tradition of text-based imagery and offer viewers a technique that elicits visual amusement as well as personal contemplation.



Megan (Oppenheim 1911)
2011 Created on A
Manual Typewriter
Typewritten ink on
Paper 9 x 9 inches

Leslie Nichols

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POETSARTISTS

Jessica (Irigaray 1977) 2012 Created on A Manual Typewriter, Typewritten ink on Paper 9 x 9 inches



Siobhan (Grimké 1837) 2011 Created on A Manual Typewriter Typewritten ink on Paper 9" x 9"

LOU ROS

In the distorted mirror of art, the reality appears undeformed.

Franz Kafka

Some artists open a resume with the list of schools where they trained and include mentors whose technical expertise brought awakening stages in their development as mature artists. Lou Ros, a dynamic investigating observer of people walking about in a world that seems to make little sense, entered the field of visual art at age 17 by way of expressing himself in the fast, of-the-moment manner of graffiti on the walls of Paris.

Though he embraced the tag game of this street training, his innate gift for creating the figure began to slow his pace as he turned his attention to the production of murals, transitory though they may have been. As his potential for making art emerged he was forced to admit that ‘there is an ethics of aesthetic beauty and repetition that eventually bores me. Painting beautiful is boring, while making a painting that has strength is quite another thing. So I started painting at home.’

Ros’ early paintings were influenced by his quiet passion for the line dancers create with their bodies. His mother is a choreographer, an advantage for his observing classes with many gratis models. Mastering the art of suggestion – a single dramatic line that need only suggest a moment in time and not be driven to a pictorial conclusion – became a philosophy of creativity that exists to today. Now, at age 28, Lou Ros has grown into an artist of particular importance whose works demand the viewer’s participation in completing the thought seeds he has planted on canvas. He gives only enough so that the viewer understands him but he allows the viewer to choose his own interpretation. He is more interested in a search of freedom and strength in an unfinished painting than the perfection of a well-finished canvas, which in his opinion only shows technical prowess. Though some may see his paintings as too easy or even weak, thinking perhaps that the artist gives up when the painting approaches complications, this



decision to stop before the painting is ‘completed’ is completely intentional. ‘In terms of finishing, it is over when I feel it is. Sometimes it’s very early in the creative process, sometimes I want to show more things. Each work has its limits that I often exceed and destroy when there is too much for my taste.’ Ros wants to present the world as he sees it. In his faces and figures he’s an uncompromising witness of his era.

The imagery of Lou Ros has progressed through several phases. For the series ‘Adopte Un Mec’ (Adopt a Guy) he explored photos from Facebook profile pictures, finding that more often than not people submitted photos that revealed only the way they wished to be seen for attracting the attention of others, even for assignations –

photos ‘edited’ by the model to present only that part of their persona that could be admired without flaw. That social statement attracted Ros to explore the inner aspects of the person publicly posted on the Internet and his resultant faces are a kind of criticism of façade, allowing him to paint images that are not ordinary. ‘The transition to painting transforms this thing again as I see it or how I feel it. I build each painting slowly in my head, quickly on the canvas, but with many short breaks to think about the result... is this enough? I de-structure faces, because in my eyes, reproducing a photograph with no particular change isn’t interesting. To captivate the eye by transforming the clear into a blur and the fixed into a movement is an active ingredient in my research.’ Such examples are obvious in *BD2*, 2012 and *DLR*, 2011.

In moving toward the complete figure Ros created his ‘Corpus Series’, the influence of some of the artists who fascinate him is apparent – Francis Bacon, Jenny Saville, Cecily Brown, Paul Rebeyrolle, Vladimir Velickovic – in his instinctive approach to the canvas. There are clues in his election to call these paintings ‘Corpus’: the Latin ‘corpus’

means the material part of a living being, with movements, providing the functions necessary to life, what distinguishes, ipso facto, soul or spirit. It also means the flesh or the body. Ros finds the relationship between the fixed image and movement to be the core of his creation. ‘Through the colors, brush strokes, composition, background and rhythm of the painting, I attempt to create works which truly represent bodies in movement without distortion.’ It is interesting to note that in some of these figures he incorporates mirrors as though both the figure and the viewer are given entry into further information about the subject (*BD*, 2011, *Corpus 9*, 2012, *Corpus 10*, 2012).



LOU ROS
Coyote 2012
mixed media
on canvas
250 X 200 cm

ART Review by Grady Harp

www.poetsandartists.com

LOU ROS

Once Lou Ros had defined the individual figures to his satisfaction, exploring those representations of the visible world as filtered through his own inner world, and with the larger studio space that allows him to expand his ideas, he approaches influences from film and from literature in creating large canvases that are near narrative. Though he still leaves moments and ideas placed before the viewer without the connection that would give a complete story, his responses are unusually powerful in the emotional impact they present. After viewing the 1985 movie 'Come and See' by the now deceased Russian director Elem Klimov, several powerful canvases emerged from Ros' studio. The film can be summarized as follows:



BD mixed media n canvas 92 X 73 cm

During WWII, a Belorussian boy is thrust into the atrocities of war, fighting with a hopelessly unequipped Soviet resistance movement against ruthless German forces. Witnessing scenes of abject terror and surviving horrifying situations, he loses his innocence and then his mind. Deeply moved by the film's imagery Lou Ros produced equally disturbing images such as *Come and See No. 32*, 2011 and *Come and See No. 38*, 2012.



Come and See No. 38 2012 mixed media on canvas 116 X 89 cm

The series on which Ros is currently working is titled 'Somewhere' and is in response to the work of the late founder of the Fluxus Movement in art Joseph Beuys (1921 – 1986). Just as Beuys extended the definition of art and frequently blurred the lines

between art and life, and fact and fiction, by suggesting that what one believed to constitute 'reality' mattered more in matters of human action, social/political behavior, and personal creativity than any definition of everyday reality based on traditional standards of 'normalcy,' or social codes of so-called 'proper' conduct, so does Ros as he begins to introduce images from his childhood as in the epic painting *Coyote*, 2012. In this painting Ros depicts himself as a five year old seated child, a coyote to his right, the intruding head of an adult male at painting's edge, and the rest of the canvas is filled with eloquently depicted flying cranes, and distant faces, mountains, portions of machinery – and we are left to reconstruct the story. This is the most powerful painting to date that Lou Ros has created and it appears to be a sign that he is becoming one of the more important artists of the day.



BD 2 2012 92 X 73 cm



It is only when you have been painting for quite some time that you will realize that to begin your compositions seem to lack impact – That they are too ordinary. That is when you will start to break all the rules of so-called composition and to think in terms of design. Then you can distort shapes, forms invent, and be on your way towards being a creative artist.

John Baldessari

Corpus 10 2012 mixed media on canvas 160 X 114 cm

Susannah Martin

www.susannahmartin.de

www.poetsandartists.com

Susannah Martin was born in New York City, U.S.A. in 1964. She received the SEHNAP Scholarship Award for painting and obtained her Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in painting, from New York University in 1986. Among others, she studied under John Kacere, Louise Lawler, Sherrie Levine and Peter Campus. Following several years of employment with Sandro La Ferla in New York, where she learned large scale scenic painting techniques, she became self-employed as a muralist. In 1991, Martin moved to Berlin where she opened her own studio, painting countless murals for public and private interiors both in Germany and the U.S.A, as well as scenic artwork for film and photography. Following the birth of her daughter in 2000, she decided to return to independent figurative painting and portraiture. Susannah Martin lives and works in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

Artist Statement/ Process explanation

ARTISTIC PROCESS

A few years ago, expanding my repertoire of painting people , I decided to take up the traditional theme of the nude in landscape. My first point of interest was to treat this subject in a contemporary manner by using , for example, a more “photographic” technique of cropping in my compositions as well as strong contrasts of light and “snapshot” or random gestures more typical of photography than of painting. At the same time I am attempting to maintain a tie to the long tradition of the painted nude as an art form through my use of classical painting techniques. I begin work by photographing my models in natural settings, taking thousands of photographs. These photographs will later be manipulated and collaged into compositions often incorporating separately collected landscape images. The collaged compositions serve as a foundation for the drawing on canvas. My painting technique is traditional in that I use multiple layers of built up glazes.

The second and perhaps more important point of interest in pursuing this theme is its relevance in our current de-humanized society. I am interested in drawing attention to our relationship to our own bodies in particular and to nature in general. The increasingly disturbed relationship between man and nature is at present what is behind the greatest threats to our well being, as well as our future existence. I have been quite surprised by many peoples discomfort with this work and I believe, considering the long history of the nude as an art form, that this discomfort reflects the lack of balance indicative of our times.

I would like to encourage people to be aware of that lack of balance and discomfort and possibly to reflect on the causes of it.





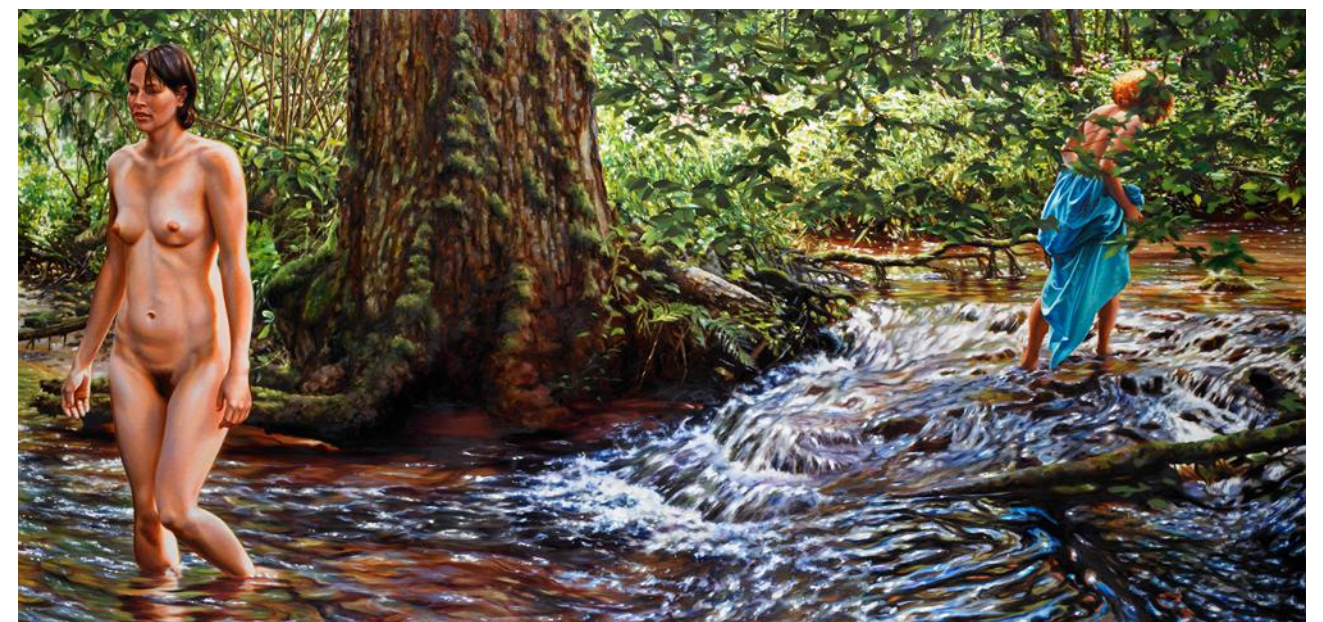
Morning Swim 2011 oil on canvas 14x 32 inches



Fräulein oil on canvas 36 x 54 inches

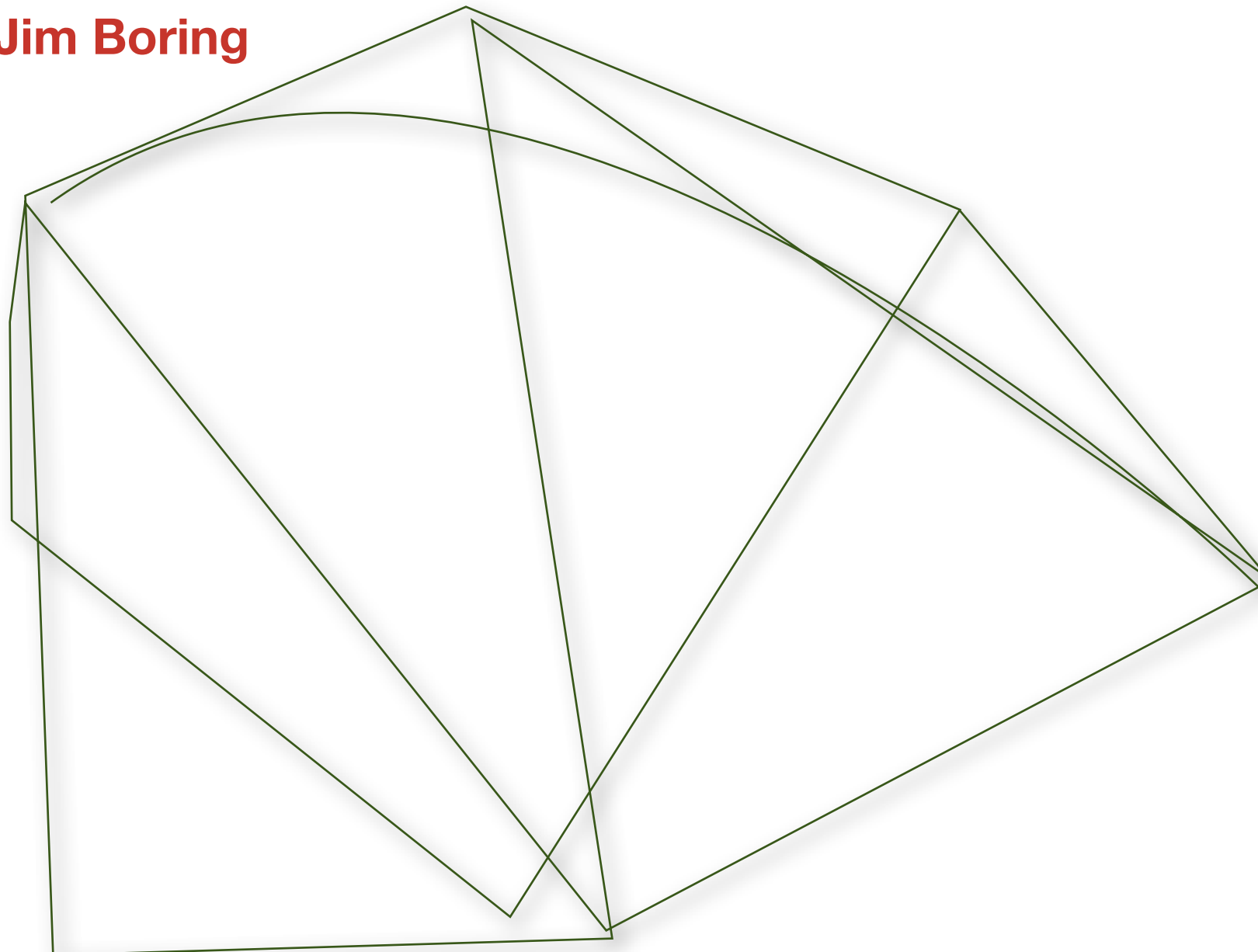
Descent
pastel on paper
39 x 26 inches

Crossing
oil on canvas
56 x 116 inches



Jim Boring

www.poetsandartists.com



Filtered

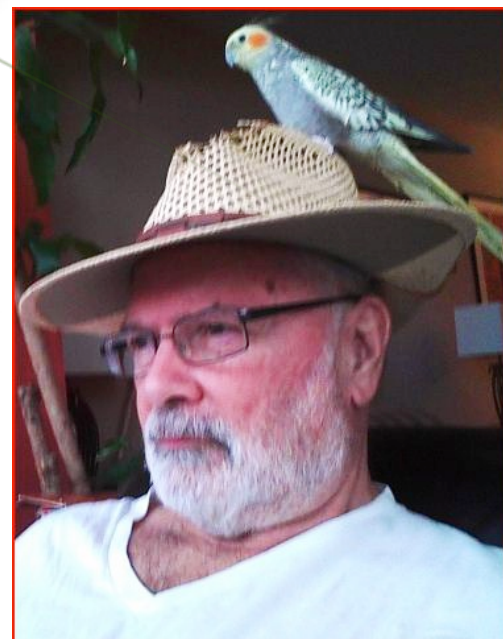
I have been so careful,
the preservatives, the artificial
coloring, the unpronounceable
ingredients, all the pollution they put in,
it is not enough.

I listen to NPR, watch Frontline,
idolize Dr. Oz, Oprah understands me.
I wear hess natur, no chemicals, no
synthetics, nothing that can harm me
or the planet. It is not enough.

I compost, recycle, read
The New York Review of Books
and Guernica. I don't do drugs –
except the usual things. I wash
with natural products. It is not enough.

My karma is cool like my music.
I like my body, except for my breasts
I am spiritual but not religious.
I am so cold. What is happening
to the air?

Jim Boring is the author of the book-length poem "Condo," (Lit Pot Press), co-author of the biography, The Horse Adjutant, (Shooster Publishing) and, in manuscript, the novel "Scraps." His poetry and stories have been published in mostly small press venues.



Interview

www.poetsandartists.com



Montgomery Maxton is a writer and photographer who lives and works in Philadelphia.

Matthew Hittinger is the author of the poetry collection *Skin Shift* (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2012) and three previous chapbooks. He lives and works in New York City. You may read more of his work at matthewhittinger.com.

Michael Ernest Sweet is a Canadian award-winning educator, writer and photographer. His first published collection of street photography is forthcoming in 2013 from Brooklyn Arts Press. Michael divides his time between Montreal and New York City. His portfolio may be viewed online at MichaelSweetPhotography.com

How much did the artist side of the two of you come into play during the falling in love process of the romance?

MH: If by artist side you mean capacity for imagination and manifesting the imaginary into something concrete, then a big part. Michael and I have created our own universe, so-to-speak, a private language of jokes and references and story lines, often involving some inanimate stuffed critters lurking about our apartments. The main stars of this ongoing show are Nicholas the bear (a gift from Michael to me), a fugitive from Canada, and a little pygmy dwarf goat named Douglas (a gift from me to Michael). Nicholas is usually up to some scheme to make money, and Douglas has happy dancing hoofs and makes pronouncements from the wind god, which all goats worship evidently. Our own individual artistic pursuits aside, this is a story we co-write daily, and it definitely came into play while we were falling for each other.

MS: I'm not sure you can ever really get rid of the artist thing. It's in you or it's not. If it is, then I think it influences everything you do in life. I'm sure that part, maybe even a lot, of the attraction was because Matthew is also an artist. I was still writing poetry when we met and I'm not too sure how I felt about him also being a poet. I think that was too much of a match so to speak (laughing). However, I'd also said much of what I had to say poetically by that time and was nearing my retirement as a poet. I think if I were still actively writing a lot of poetry – in that world as they say – things would be different. I think we'd fight more. Seriously, I think we would. Our poetic styles are very, very different. Anyway, my writing is pretty much just essays these days and most of my artistic energy is directed toward my photography. It all worked out. I'm a retired poet and I'm in love.

Do you feed off of each other's artistic energy? If so can you give an example?

MS: I think we feed off of each other being an artist. That is, it's good to know that you're with someone who appreciates the arts, who 'get's it'. We also do find inspiration in each other. I think that's easier for Matthew, as I think it is easier to find a muse as a poet. Then again, I've been known to take a few photographs of him also. I guess it goes both ways, yes.

MH: It's hard for me to isolate Michael's artistic energy. I think if you're engaged in the arts, it's just ingrained in you. I mean Michael also paints and writes and dabbles in a bunch of other creative outlets. It's energizing to be with someone who has a passion and is dedicated to it. When Michael and I met he was at a crossroads, winding down a rather high profile career as an award-winning public educator and publisher of student work and poet, and during our time together I've watched him reinvent himself as a photographer. Photography's not a "new" thing for him – I've heard stories from his aunt about how he took photos as a kid and went door-to-door with them in a briefcase, selling them to neighbors. It's been exciting to watch him build a body of photographic work and even more exciting to see the public reaction to it be so quick and immediate and positive.

You have a jetset romance, the hour-long Montreal-Manhattan cloud-corridor; so how much does the difference between the two cities (I've lived in NYC and spent a great deal

of time in Montreal) play into both your relationship and your art? Also, what is your airline of choice?

MH: Well, I do a lot more of my writing now in Montreal. When I first moved to NY, the subway was my "office" where I did most of my writing, albeit in a fragmentary, jottings-on-the-backs-of-bookmarks, kind of way. But you know how busy life can get in NY; Montreal offers brain breaks where I catch up on sleep and reading and attend to my journal. Michael lives downtown, on the 18th floor of his building, and he has great views of the city. Many of the poems I've been working on the past few years were first drafted on his balcony. You see so much from up there: student demonstrations down Sherbrooke, fireworks displays over the river, the Biodome and Berri bus station, the fancy condos next to public housing, the weird mishmash of 70s-architecture-Olympics-host-building-boom and more recent modern-21st-century-building-boom, the foot and bicycle traffic, house fires, double rainbows.

MS: I think this is one of the biggest benefits of our relationship and also one of the greatest challenges. It's definitely a double-edged sword. I like that I get access to two of North America's greatest cities – two cities that are so distinct and unique. I also like that we maintain two homes. It's not so much that I have a home and Matthew has a home, but that we have two homes. It allows us for space, which I think is important given that we are both creative minds.

MH: I'd echo that. We're both pretty independent people and understand the underlying fact that being an artist means having precious alone time to work on the art. I think we've become pretty good at "being alone together" – sometimes it's just being in the same room working on our stuff – the presence of the other without having to necessarily speak – responding to each other's body language. And I like having another city to run off to frequently, a city with a very different kind of energy than NY. When an event's happening in Montreal I feel like the whole town knows about it ("there's a Chinese lantern exhibit at the Botanical Gardens? Let's go!"), whereas in NY there are so many options competing all the time it can be a bit overwhelming and I only get to a fraction of them. A nice benefit is we get to visit each other's spaces and give each other "tours" of our home cities, taking each other to all our favorite restaurants and museums and other cherished spots.

MS: The thing I don't like is that sometimes on a random Tuesday evening I have to come home to an empty apartment. The time apart is not always when we'd choose it, supposing we could choose it. The bottom line is that there really are benefits and drawbacks to the situation and we just try to focus on and capitalize on the benefits. We don't expect to always live in two cities mind you. It's working for now. Artistically speaking I'm very happy to have this time in my life to access New York City so regularly. She's made my name as a photographer. You can do things in NYC as a street photographer that you just cannot do most anywhere else. Then again, Montreal adds that European flavor which can be invigorating to an artist also. I prefer to fly Amtrak. But, if I really must actually take to the sky I like anything other than Air Canada. So patriotic I know (laughing).

MH: And I pretty much only fly Air Canada. Though I've taken the train a few times, including the very first time I visited Montreal – the Adirondack 69.

I've read that 9 out of 10 long-distance relationships end in being disconnected (I use that word because they usually are lived via electronic telecommunication). How has your relationship survived? Is it the art?

MS: I'm not sure I'd credit the art for maintaining our relationship. Perhaps just that art makes us more human. But, no, I think our relationship has survived because we have been committed to working with one another through our problems. We've had problems - like any couple - but we haven't run from them. We've learned to talk openly and to communicate well. We're still learning, but we've made good progress when it comes to that stuff. We love each other deeply and that's powerful. It really does overcome just about everything. You know, I think a lot of people today smother each other in relationships. They put too much emphasis on sex up front and they live together too quickly and so on. They set up a situation that is bound to crumble. Matthew and I have spent a long time getting to know one another and building a relationship one piece at a time. We knew each other for nearly a year before we even met. I think that all plays a part in why it works. We built a solid foundation.

MH: Michael, so he tells me, “discovered” me in the Poets&Writers directory when he was logging out of his profile one day and I popped up in the featured profiles they cycle through. I think one of the photos from the 2008 MiPOesias spread is the profile pic, and that led him to my website and then he emailed me to say he liked my work. So before we ever met we were communicating via email for many months and laying a foundation as we got to know each other, which I think was ultimately more important than the art. Maybe that was the hook, but our problems over the years have been normal couple problems and we've worked through them out of a commitment to each other and our relationship. Long distance isn't easy, but we've made it work, probably because, as I noted earlier, we're both pretty independent. It's, as Michael said, the random Tuesday night when you come home from a long day and just want your partner to be there when it gets hard. We Skype nightly, but it's not always enough. A benefit of the distance: without the distraction of the body, you're really forced to get to know each other via the written word in the daily emails that get exchanged. We also have a pretty regular schedule figured out now of when we physically get to see each other. Michael teaches, so he spends his summers and breaks in NY, and I do a lot of long weekends up in Montreal. All relationships take work to maintain, and we've been equally committed to making this work, so I think that's our “secret”.

Have you ever considered collaborating on a book? Perhaps poems written by you, Matthew, that are inspired by Michael's photographs. Furthermore, Michael, have you ever taken a picture and said “that reminds me of one of Matthew's poems.”

MH: I do have some of Michael's NY photos in mind as potential covers for Impossible Gotham – once I find a publisher for the collection. I wrote most of those poems before I met Michael,

though, in my early years in NY, so they're not a direct response to his street photos. But I feel a kindred energy with some of his photos and what I was trying to capture in that book. I do see ourselves collaborating one day on the right project, but right now I think we're just focused on very different work. My imagination's all wrapped up in Sphinxes and asterisks and Marilyn Monroe at the moment. And Michael's been playing around with polaroids amongst other things.

MS: (Laughing) I cannot think of a faster way to kill this relationship. You know what, some day. Some day I can see this happening, easily. Not now. We're both too caught up in our own work - too self-interested - for that to work. Matthew probably won't agree with this but I know. I can barely stand someone else publishing my book. I'm happy with my publisher (Brooklyn Arts Press) don't get me wrong. But I've been a publisher. I ran a non-profit press for kids for five years. I know what I'm doing and I just want to do it myself some days. I cannot imagine, given these feelings, these urges, bringing that into my relationship. I like to work alone okay! On the other hand, some kind of limited collaboration like an evening performance (Matthew reading, my photographs on display, etc.), that we've discussed. I'd like to try that sometime. Mind you, our work is very different. It comes from a different place. Matthew is very deliberate and cerebral with his art; I'm very edgy, nervous and haphazard with mine.

Michael, the first National Geographic photograph I took was in Montreal, so I've a fondness for this unique city. Do you remember the first photograph you took that you said to yourself “Okay, yeah, I can do this”?

MS: I'm not sure there was one specific photograph necessarily. I think it was when Leica took an interest in my work and interviewed me. I think that was when I was like huh, Leica eh? And then came Popular Photography Magazine. It was with these more established institutions and their interest in my work that really signaled to me that I was doing something legit - something worth getting serious about. I'd had work in dozens of indie magazines and journals and stuff but when these big names start knocking, you know something is really happening. Like you with National Geographic I imagine.

Matthew, you recently released a book, Skin Shift, with the red hot publisher Sibling Rivalry Press. How has your experience been working with the publisher everyone wants to be published by?

MH: I feel like one of my fellow authors at SRP may have said this already, so this could be a quote, but it is like a day at the spa. Bryan is a sensitive reader and super-organized and hell-bent on making sure your book is exactly how you want it. A highly collaborative process, too, everything from choosing the fonts to cover art to entertaining ideas on how to promote it. He's not a pushover, though--while open to any and all ideas, if an idea's too far out there, he won't hesitate to kill it, but always with good reason to back up his decision. But bottom-line: he goes to great lengths to make sure you are comfortable and taken care of during the whole process. And that you're having fun! I can't underscore that enough.



Woman in Mask

Love in war time must be like this: eyes as moons,
tracking their smoothed arcs around all wrecks fused
to one. She swims, if that is the word, great swirls

of teal, mustard, and envy in the hard *kkhhlluugg*
of her breathing until only the silence remains.
Her mask, a desperate gift to fingers, is like

that one perfect moment in a B movie when
the woman, refusing to be victim, rises from a cold,
misted lake, the terrible and beautiful dripping

from her body – she stumbles to a shore, long since
willed to nothing, then disappears into some murky,
relentless gnarl of trees for absolute reckoning.

Sam Rasnake's works have appeared in *The Southern Poetry Anthology*, *Best of the Web 2009*, *MiPOesias Companion 2012*, *Wigleaf*, *OCHO*, *Big Muddy*, *Literal Latté*, *LUMMOX 2012*, *BOXCAR Poetry Review Anthology 2*, and *Dogzplot Flash Fiction 2011*. His latest poetry collections are *Lessons in Morphology (GOSS183)* and *Inside a Broken Clock (Finishing*