

7.9.14 — FULL FATHOM FIVE

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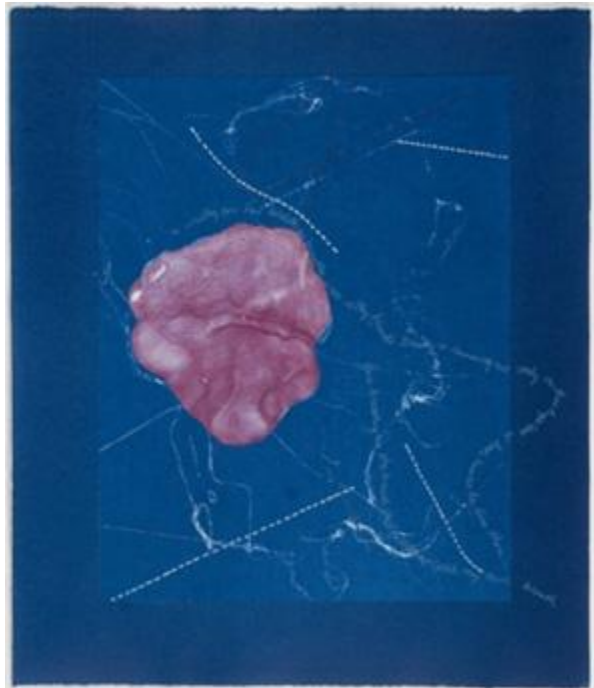
art reviews from around new york

A lovely thing about summer, even for those who miss art, is fewer exhibitions and more time to read. And a lovely thing about one summer group show is how its contributors share the making of both pictures and words.

“This Music Crept By Me upon the Waters” invites five artists to choose their poet, at **Lesley Heller** through July 12, with the goal of collaboration rather than illustration. They work in prints, although with media often closer to carvings, to collage, or to brushed pigment. They move freely between nature, popular culture, and personal memories. They also extend one’s expectations for both poetry and an **artist’s book**.

With five pairs sounding the depths (plus Ming Fay’s stark figurative sculpture out front), one might think of Shakespeare’s “Full Fathom Five,” and the show takes its title from *The Tempest*, where Ariel’s song of a father’s death recalls King Ferdinand to life. T. S. Eliot quotes those same words in the sadder context of “The Waste Land.” In each case, the otherworldly spirit is lying, for life goes on.

Nene Humphrey, too, is grappling with loss by casting her spell on the waters. She recorded her husband’s breathing before his death in 2006, and in response Tom Sleight wrote “Recording.” Her central shapes, in violet against blue, and her white tracery swell out like jellyfish with the currents and the air.



Words here bubble up beneath the surface, and Jane South was in a 1997 show of “**Burgeoning Geometries**.” This time, though, her wood and laser-cut museum board have a decided bluntness. Her

tabs spin out from a bolt like master keys. *Show through* —, one reads, and Miles Champion's words often show right through. New owners can rearrange them to their liking, relishing the tactile sensation. The poem is "Providence," and who can say whether meanings arise by fate or by chance?

Looking for sentence structure or resolution? For most people, living poets are even more of an acquired taste than emerging art, and Campbell McGrath is terser still. His poem is also somewhere between cultural background noise and signage, as part his "American Noise" collection. And then Stephen Powers reduces it further, to *Ice Cold to Go*, with a six-pack at their center. His frosted letters do not add all that much to the familiarity of Pop Art, but then they do not try for more. One can almost taste them.

Ken Buhler sticks closest to an **artist's book**. For him and Cecily Parks, it is also **anatural history**. They choose upbeat bird names, like *Resplendent Quetzal* and *Superb Lyrebird*, and then they start riffing. The pages allow separate areas for images and words, but also ample white space that sets off their density. Where Humphrey settles into blue depths, Buhler pumps up the colors of a pond's or garden's surface. One might be seeing the birds or their habitat.

Where Buhler treats a book as fine art, Dianne Kornberg prefers the graphic novel to the illuminated manuscript. Yet her lettering is as artful as her pearly blackness, flesh tones, flame-like thighs, and upturned legs crossed by stars. It also gives particular attention to Celia Bland's words, in speech balloons and a bottom border. "The sap dripping along his thigh slow as the unconscious delineation of justice and error. A fine dust collects." Whoever "she" is, it is a good bet that *The Education of the Virgin* will not leave her a virgin.