

## ***The Writing's on the Wall: Poetry & MoNA 2024***

These poems were created by poets who gathered to write pieces inspired by the art in MoNA's galleries at a [Poetry Writing in the Galleries event](#) in September 2024.



**Inspired by *Return to Odysseus: Tribute to Nikos Kazantzakis* by William Cumming. MoNA, gift of Marshall and Helen Hatch.**

"As I stand, lure-and-hooked to the painting, a woman pauses and joins me there in the gallery.

I have my phone in hand, taking a snapshot of the picture, framed, and second closeup of the words handwritten in the upper right corner of the canvas, above the figures

"What drew you to the piece?", she asks me.

"The colorful dog did first, but then the motion of the figures...and the words, here"

"What does it say?"

I've already deciphered them and read aloud, "my soul,  
your voyages  
have been  
your  
native land!  
- K."

- Jen Walker



Inspired by *La Siempre Viva de Clayton* by William Slater. MoNA, gift of the Estate of Susan Parke.

- Julia Thie

Each seed a promise  
of light in the dark.

Persephone revealed at the gates,  
emerging whole again.

No shadow removed her light.  
No prodigal act needed forgiveness.  
Her completeness hidden only by the earthly bargain  
seeming gone.

As each lost child's deep need to return is quenched,  
the red clay celebrates anew.

Intoxicating juice in the vine  
replenishes in remembrance  
of true home's promise.

.....



Inspired by *Overlook* by John Cole. MoNA, gift of Lucille Cole and the Estate of John Cole.

- Julia Thie

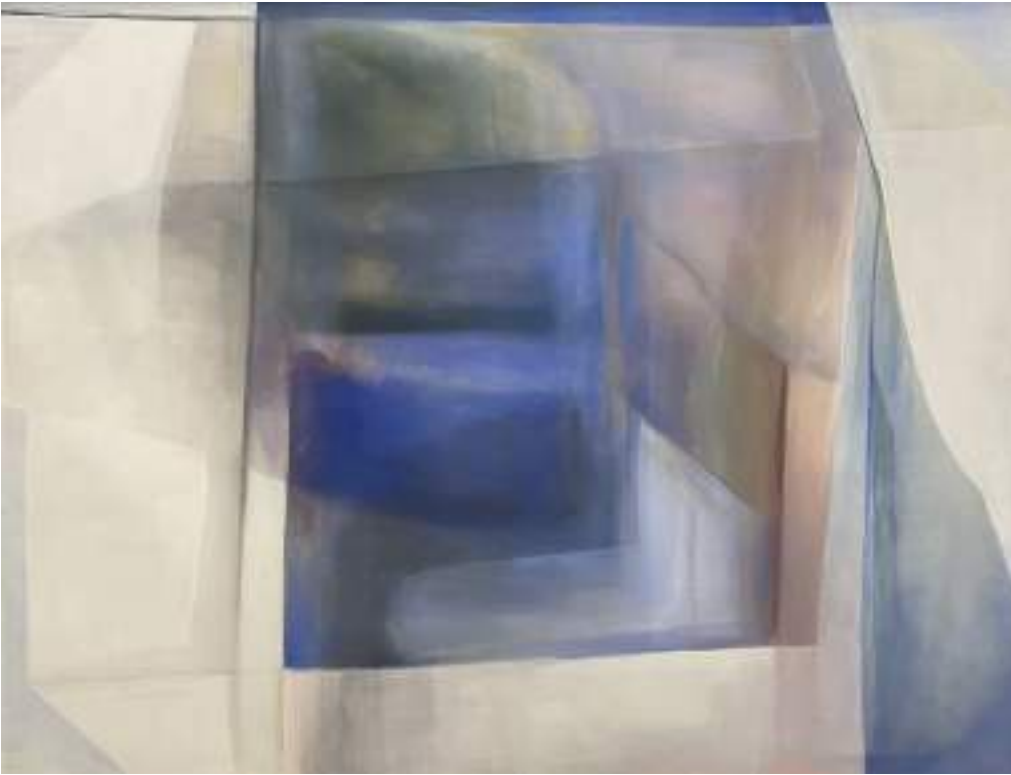
Calling the wind,  
the river's salmon song  
curves across the staff.

Memory; the long-held hum.

Trilling ripples of shiny tails splashing at sharp turns,  
punctuated by staccato crested waves bursting on elder rock  
wearing smooth.

Timeless chords  
ever shaping a sonic symphony  
of spawning wisdom.

.....



Inspired by *Passages* by Margaret Tompkins. MoNA, gift of Liberty Mutual Insurance.

- Julia Thie

Sitting in the solarium waiting;  
waiting for the day's heat to fade from the stone walls,  
waiting for the melting of her grief to begin.

Each day she waited here for his call,  
for his next breath.

Meeting each need of a life leaving its form.  
Waiting for regret's release,  
for angel's summoning.

When they came,  
they took the warmth with them.

A breath exhaled.

Carried away like the dark fragrance of night jasmine  
woven in the trellis on these bony walls.

The bed now neatly made,  
she welcomes the sun  
even at its days end.

\*\*\*\*



**Inspired by *El Huipil* by Alfredo Arreguin. MoNA, gift of the Estate of Alfredo Arreguín.**

*Frida with peacocks at her feet*

Peacocks at her feet

Smaller than her fragile pride

Such strength in her head and neck

Fine clothes arrayed just so

If she spoke now would she

Scream like the howling cry

of a peacock, enraged,

Wanting to come back and

Wrestle once again with life

Love art color tragedy and perseverance? Anne Wehrly

That night, I dream "The absence of pain is not happiness"

and do not know if it is for me

or Frida

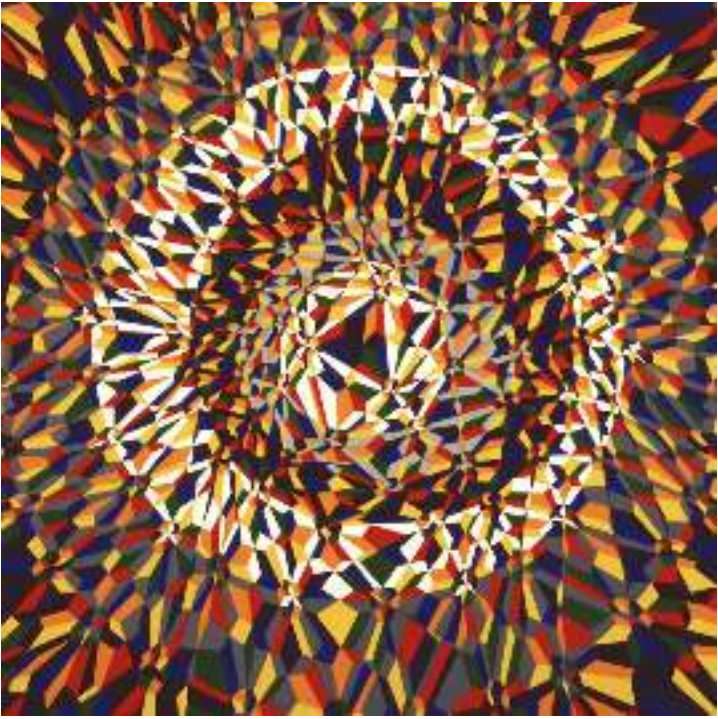
*Ekphrastic Tanka* by Patrick Gallagher



Inspired by *Dancer in Blue* by Guy Anderson (MoNA, gift of Ann Morris) and *Pink Flower* by Mark Tobey (MoNA, gift of Miani Johnson, in memory of Marshall Hatch).

blue boy  
the flower sexier  
than the nude  
the director warned us  
about prudery





Inspired by *Clock* by Michael Knutson. MoNA, gift of the Artist.

this patchwork  
from afar a spiral  
up close  
it draws me in  
and sets me spinning

Inspired by *Garnering* by William Morris. Loan courtesy of the Artist and William Morris Studio.

a glass skull  
more permanent than mine  
we recognize  
poor Yorick's  
will live forever

Inspired by *Whitewashed* and *Divine, Divinity, Deity* by Joseph Gregory Rossano. Loans courtesy of the Artist.

whitewashed cedar  
hides the awful crimes  
solved by DNA  
and distorted images  
of the perps

- Patrick Gallagher



Inspired by *Mural of Skagit County Agriculture 1941* by William Cumming. MoNA, gift of the Breckenridge Family.



*Detail of Mural of Skagit County Agriculture 1941* by William Cumming

### N3

is a bent back, clothed  
in an old green coat.  
Other squares have hands  
milking the cows,  
have other bodies at work  
but the museum needs money  
to tend this old sailcloth mural,  
nearly lost in an burned-up barn,  
and I have plunked down  
one hundred dollars  
for N3 in the name  
of my grandfather Frank  
for all the years  
he bent his back toward a cow  
who was once a heifer  
and filled pail  
after dented pail  
    with warm, steaming milk.

- Lisa Charnock 2024





Inspired by *Dancer in Blue* by Guy Anderson. MoNA, gift of Ann Morris.

*Waiting*

He stands staring at the entrance onto the stage  
knowing he will dance for the wealthy merchants  
and his lover, who must remain in a shadow like how  
night's dark sapphire shapes around his body.  
Later, he picks up the hand that will soon slide  
down his chest so that waves echo through blue  
fabric, triggering the song, "I Think I Love You,"  
as he slowly reaches to slip off the red cravat,  
unbuttoning an indigo waistcoat, all done in  
first position, then a graceful plié and  
relevé to reach the waiting mouth.

- Cynthia R. Pratt 2024



**Inspired by *M-VII* by Frank Okada. MoNA, gift of Andy Cargo.**

*While Looking at Frank Okada's Painting, M.VIII, 1992*  
*I First See Only Orange*

A landscape without landscape, only glow,  
imagine heat so hot the color of orange pulses,  
that is how it feels to stand in front  
of this so large empty painting. My eyes  
burn, and then movement just past the frame.

Now a foot enters in the lower left corner, bare  
and brown, beautifully lean. It's a woman.  
Her dress dark azure, wraps around her tightly  
holding her body like a canvas. Light bounces off  
her face and bare arms. Her hair is caught up  
in the taste of sunset making my mouth thirst.  
I lean forward and smell the long strands smelling  
of citrus. She balances a basket on their head.  
I want to tell her how impressed I am that it  
barely wobbles even though it is filled with fruit.

Soon a boy with only white trousers, a twisted  
braid of cloth tied around his waist, skips  
behind her. He has entered from the upper  
left corner. His white belt flips loose at his side.  
Is she his mother, I ask myself?  
He sings a song with words I can't understand,  
but the tune warms me as much as the light  
shining off his thin legs. And look,  
I have missed the dung and grass hut in the upper  
right corner, and the three goats, and to my surprise,  
the thorn bush branches that make up the fence,  
dark against the brilliant sun giving off one last burst  
before the night paints over the day's searing temperature.

- Cynthia R. Pratt, 2024



Inspired by *Standing Stone* by William Morris. MoNA, gift of Patsy Collins.

Global Warning  
after *Standing Stone* by William Morris

fire on the planet  
circles heat  
palm of my hand  
burns when I reach  
what is covered in flame  
revolves on the color wheel  
orange, black, brown, yellow  
sometimes the tirade  
circles for dramatic effect  
each spread of latitude  
circles the sphere  
I circle the circle  
to relearn what I know  
I know smoke rises  
but when I turn  
I lose reference  
and the earth  
is cattywampus  
with all the pots and pans  
I banged loudly  
to welcome the new year  
now a catch-all  
for rainwater

- Mary Ellen Talley, Poets on the Coast 2024



**Inspired by *Viola's Mandolin* by Spencer Mosley.**  
**MoNA, gift of Ronald D. Childers and Richard M. Proctor**  
The Floyd Country Store

Viola smoked a pipe  
and played the mandolin  
no longer even forcing a smile  
when asked for the umpteenth time,  
“Why not the viola, Viola?”

Sunday afternoons she drove her truck  
up the foggy green mountain  
joined the folding chair circle  
at the back of the general store.

The speed of her fingers was her revenge against time,  
runs up and down the strings as clear as spring streams  
melodies flashing sharp as summer lightning  
until the mandolin glowed orange in her hands.

Old men could not help but  
stand up and dance,  
stomping out the stories of their lives  
with their Sunday shoes, clogging away  
achy knees, creaky hips, grief.

Their steps telegraphing the message:  
“All dies and all lives forever,”  
the wood of a long-felled tree  
now a mandolin in Viola's hands  
as old men dance old dances,  
lifting up their grandchildren's feet  
with their own. - Stacey Jones, September 2024, Poets on the Coast



Inspired by *Longhouse* by Helmi Juvonen. MoNA, gift of Wesley Wehr.

*Dancing with the Dead*

Her house is ill,  
they said.  
Unhinged shutters,  
band-aids on the roof,  
boards as exposed as skeleton bones,  
a crooked door that's lost its will,  
and a roofline of sagging skin.  
Her house is ill,  
and it allows no one out,  
and no one in.

The native peoples  
said of their treasured mad woman  
with skin white as pearl  
that she is  
broken in the head.  
—but, that sacred wound,  
allows darkness to seep in.  
And in those spirit-filled shadows  
she dances with the dead.



It took her a lifetime,  
to embrace the brokenness in her head—  
—her dark shadow sister who never saw the sun—  
A sister coiled in nocturnal corners, dreaming of  
wolves, trees, and danger  
she was never able to outrun.

The trees that surround her house are  
not quite alive  
not quite dead,  
they haunt the yard  
—redolent with tears and blood of the fallen  
sister who never saw the sun.  
She is broken in the head,  
they said.

In those mist-shrouded trees  
she sees  
The Keeper of Drowned Souls.  
His green long-fingered hand,  
spindly as spider legs,  
beckons her to follow  
deep, deeper into the hollow.

The Keeper of Drowned Souls exists  
transitory between the human world and the phantom world  
he tells her,  
her dark sister who coils like a snake  
inside her house,  
is condemned to endless hunger, agony, wandering, and sin.  
Because her house is ill,  
it allows no one out,  
yet he wants in.

She is broken in the head,  
they said.  
She observes ethereal phantoms,  
and dances with the dead.

- Mindy Meyers-Halleck, September 2024

## Inspired by MoNA's overall exhibition of Northwest Art

### Choreography of Darkness

Northwest art is  
an intricate shadow dance.  
A ballet of cultural disparities.  
A revolution in every  
painted canvas,  
coil of ceramic,  
string of beads,  
weave of fabric,  
twining of straw  
of  
People torn apart by conflict  
stolen breath now in awe.  
—A second chance.  
The shadow dance.

Reunited by love's responsive tango  
sidestepping through phantom customs—  
Nowhere else to go.  
The shadow dance.  
Each step, a tear spilled like waters over parched lands  
Eternal as  
grandmother holding granddaughter's hands.  
—the shadow dance.

Transported to the disco floor  
by happenstance—  
Tiptoeing between  
past and present  
a jazz-footed shadow dance  
from closed to open door.  
A confident pirouette  
threading the now with what came before.

Salvation lies in ritual  
sacred communion  
from soul death to sacrament  
unholy alliances, but  
no time to lament—

Reunion revives the waltz with the natural world  
wood, water, bird, and wolf.

—howling beneath a purple moon.  
Then a rhythmic whirl to and fro,  
to commune  
with the netherworld.  
Ancient and modern—  
Calling from above to below.  
Skin ablaze with sweat,  
basking in midnight's afterglow,  
captured in hypnotic watercolor,  
lest anyone try to forget.

To shadow dance  
is to  
tell stories without words.  
Meaning in every movement  
—A choreography of darkness.  
Befriending the shadow  
—is restoration.

Ritual binds  
through a complex foxtrot of art, dance, touch and love  
the sacred aligns.  
From conflict to coexistence.  
The shadow dance is soul art.  
Art is liberation.  
Liberation is resistance.

- Mindy Meyers-Halleck, September 2024



Inspired by *Sxwo'le Anchor* by Dan Friday. MoNA, purchase made possible by the 2023 members of the Museum of Northwest Art's Collector's Club: Rose Dennis, Karen Walsh Roe, Meg Holgate, Ann Caldwell, Donald Caldwell, Bruce Bradburn, Joan Cross, Michael Thuot, Josie Turner, Joanne Fredrich, Stephen Willson, Sarah Dalton, Sheena Aebig, Eric Taylor, Jennie Ellis, Jim Ellis, Donna Watson, Tom Mansfield, Chris Elliott, Allen Elliott. *Reef nets with anchor stones were used by Lummi salmon fishermen. This traditional fishing method was effectively banned in the 1890s. Learn more [here](#) and [here](#).*

Anchor Stones Left on the Sea Bed Start to Stir

Notched, penetrated,  
the “o” to nowhere, a loop,  
held by rope while holding rope,  
a skein, frame upon frame square  
on the hatchet-cut flare of a gill.

Millions in this salmon run vied to reach  
the storied creek – their compass circled them here.  
Rub of willow-twined reef net and brackish mouth,  
river current against salmon current against saltwater tide:  
the stones held them all.

And now, nets long gone, the stones glisten and vein  
sediment and salt-washed air bladder  
liver and milkish belly  
translucent as glass, blood and glow.

After taking lives, season after season  
the desperate minutes, the thrashing  
the dormant century  
    they begin to revolve  
                                grow the buds of gills

- Eileen Walsh Duncan, Poets on the Coast 2024



**Woolly Rhino (At The Top of Her Lungs series), *Coelodonta antiquitatis* (Woolly Rhinoceros) by Joseph Gregory Rossano. Loan courtesy of the Artist.**

Once and Always Divine

inspired by the works on wood, in tar, whitewash, and graphite,  
by Joseph Gregory Rossano: *Portraits of the Divine*

How apt these materials—tar, whitewash,  
graphite, each of organisms altered  
by death and days, to depict animals  
in existential limbo or extinct ...

Tar—pitch—black, viscous, may surface from depths.  
The asphalt, once, before burial, life,  
abundant, minuscule, oceanic.

Calcite shells of coccoliths, assembled  
too on an ancient seabed, yielded chalk.  
Slake the limestone for milky paint: whitewash.

Graphite's source, coal—metamorphosed, began  
as ferns and moss, plant spirits of the past.

... characters—of now and before—schooling  
and solitary—hairy elephants  
with gentle expressions, cats with canines  
curving spearlike from closed lips, serpents, fish.

- Pamela Hobart Carter 2024 Poets on the Coast





Inspired by *Ivory*, a sculptural installation by Joseph Gregory Rossano. Loan courtesy of the Artist.

a gleam	a sliver	a shatter
a scatter	roped off	the silver
in this cavernous room		
elephant tusks	rhino horns	
laid over	piled onto	fistfuls of glass
like	ancient berg ice	Douglas fir table
inches off the floor	such waste	this slaughter
this beauty	given	sacrificed
to a difficult god	less noble than profane	
less noble than profane	to a difficult god	
sacrificed	given	this beauty
this slaughter	such waste	inches off the floor
Douglas fir table	ancient berg ice	like
fistfuls of glass	piled onto	laid over
rhino horns	elephant tusks	
in this cavernous room		
the silver	roped off	a scatter
a shatter	a sliver	a gleam



**Inspired by William Morris' *Standing Stone* series. Loan courtesy of the Artist and William Morris Studio.**

### Prayer

The mighty glass sculpture stands tall  
on its pedestal. Its milky white surface  
translucent, more moonstone than pearl.  
I see how it radiates the museum's spotlight  
as if lit from within. How the smooth, steady  
ridges widen base to top, drawing my eyes up.

It reminds me how much I wait for You  
to call me by name, to tap me on the shoulder,  
and deliver map and compass and comfort food.  
Send me angels, I say, with megaphones and flares.  
Light my path, I beg, even if just with votive candles.  
But all I hear You say is: Be still. Be you.

– Christina Hulet



Inspired by *Mural of Skagit County Agriculture 1941* by William Cumming. MoNA, gift of the Breckenridge Family.

Skagit Valley Mural, 1941

William Cummings  
Museum of Northwest Art

You who have wielded the maul these eighty-odd years,  
your work boots heavy below bent knees—  
you can set it down now.

And you with the milk can—your back must ache  
after all these years. Set it down.

The stooped farmer may rise and the milker  
may return the cows to pasture.

The clouds gathered long ago, and the rain  
replenished the earth.

You have worked through so many Sabbaths,  
you have worked for a lifetime.  
It's time to rest.

-Suzy Harris

## Farm Work Recovered

after *Lost and Found*, Discovered 1941 mural  
by Northwest Master, William Cumming  
at Museum of Northwest Art

In the muted colors of the WPA's  
social realism and faded by years  
rolled up in a barn, these bodies labor  
in the frozen motion of a mural  
spread across the museum wall.

No detail in the faces, we focus  
on bodies in the shape of work.

Legs spread to the task, back bent  
toward the half-built fence, hands  
clenched around a hammer  
so heavy, my arms ache.

A man pitches hay in my father's  
blue overalls, baggy at the crotch.  
And here, with his hat pulled down,  
he slumps on a stool to milk the cow.  
I can feel the rough teat when I try.  
Slight spurts but never the flow  
that will fill a bucket. I annoy the cow.  
But these seem calm, their heads  
unseen inside their stall.

And calm is the man who stands  
in heavy boots that balance  
on uneven rock. His pants held up  
by suspenders. There's a tree  
to be felled. His gaze sees only  
the angled gap he's chopped,  
while he holds the ax suspended  
before the next swing.

In a round crouch a skirted figure  
reaches deep into berry bushes.  
I see my mother straighten, place  
her hands on the small of her back.  
A sigh escapes. All these bodies  
are working. All these bodies are moving.

Even the hills that roll on the horizon  
and the clouds that darken in the distance,  
threatening an end to the day's labor.  
Predicting an end to the WPA  
and this artist's project, soon to be  
rolled away, stored in a barn like the one  
in this mural. Hidden in history, until  
some part peeks out and tells us to remember.

- Deborah Corr



**Inspired by *La Siempre Viva de Clayton* by William Slater. MoNA, gift of the Estate of Susan Parke.**

Inside the Kiln

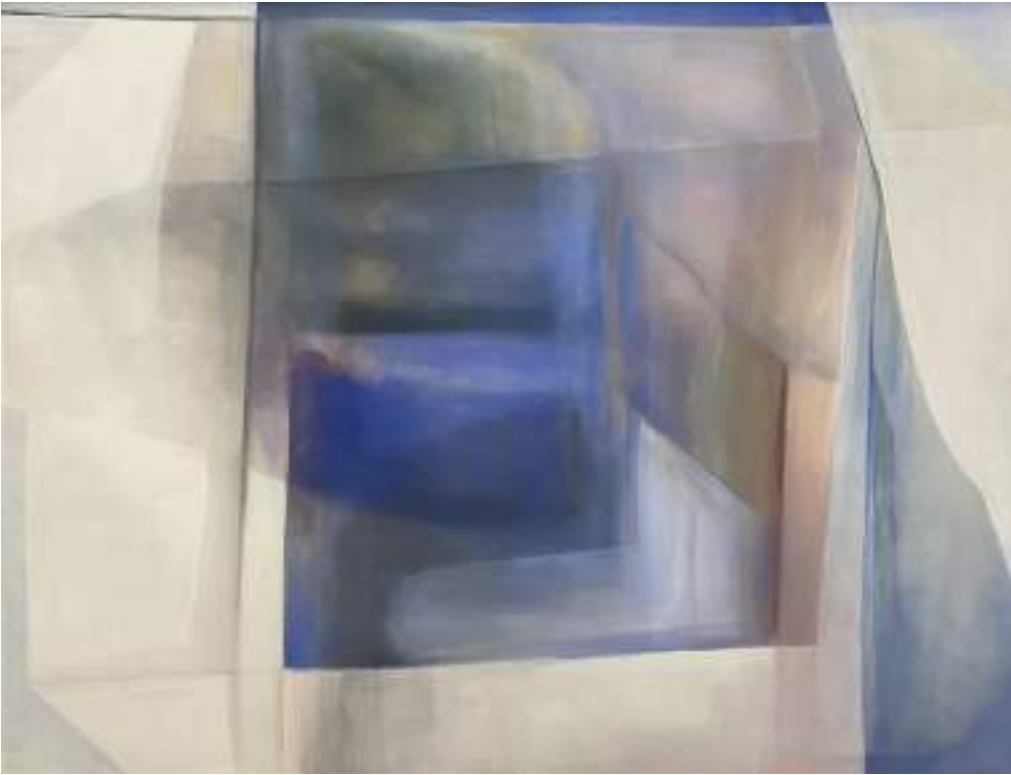
How did he know, just how the fire raged on the pot inside the kiln?  
The bruising orange deepening to red.  
The crush of smother.  
That growing peach pit black scar along the opening.  
Memories of the crash, of darkness, love's death, ashes?

Or, perhaps this glowing, this enlightenment of vessel,  
this renewed memory of consciousness, might be  
the afterburn of peace?  
See that rich vestment green swath with impeccable borders.  
Inordinate in ordinary times, but not here.

Perhaps hope in hopeless time was on his mind.  
A child survives. Reconcile with that.  
Make marks as though life depends upon it.  
Make all color a sacrament.

- Georgia Johnson, September 2024





**Inspired by *Passages* by Margaret Tompkins.** MoNA, gift of Liberty Mutual Insurance.

### **What You See is What**

poem by Mark Strohschein

*concerned with quietude*

pastels punctuate the piece  
peace must be fought for  
in life's brilliant incongruities

*inner penetration*

jaws birthing mountain & sky  
or the monster gulping the natural world  
with icicle teeth

*shifting levels of dimensions*

no firm footing  
always sliding down hills of ice  
try try to center yourself

*no inner theme*

life's evolving ambiguities  
a reverse scarlet flag  
history pressing us to the wall

## Inspired by John Cole

Sharp shards of trees-thick,  
Winter water,blue, icy flowing  
In zig-zag pattern.  
The river journey ends.

- Louise Perram



Inspired by Helmi Juvonen's *Longhouse*. MoNA, gift of Wesley Wehr.

For Helmi Juvonen

I walk into your drawing-  
Like an engraving, intricate.  
A small house sits in the background.

Trees frame the house.  
All seems grey and white and lonely really.  
I want to get out of the painting,  
And go elsewhere.  
The painting speaks of loneliness.  
Surely, Helmi, you must have been lonely,  
Trying to eke out a living with Manic Depression  
And spending 25 years in a convalescent home.  
I want to thank you for being so brave.  
The desire to make something beautiful most have been -  
So powerful.  
If your artwork could speak to us today,  
What would it say?

- Louise Perram



**Inspired by Shelley Muzykowski-Allen's *Steel Blue Serpentine Horse*. MoNA, gift of the Artist.**

I See the Headless Horseman's

horse, horse without a body  
sculpted and engraved on display.

Not long ago my husband heard  
the pair ride through the nursing home.

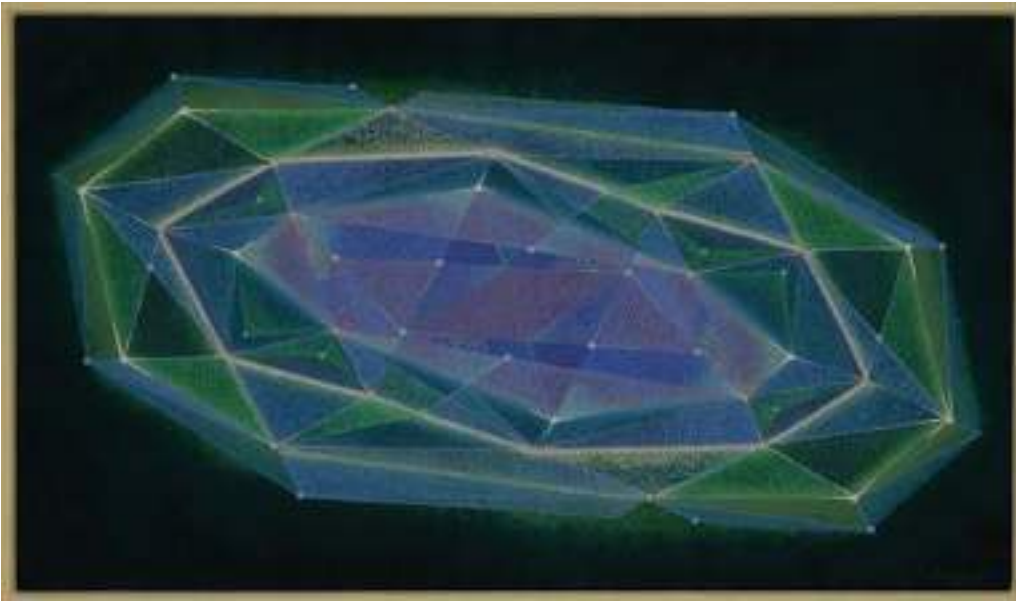
*The reaper's here, the reaper's here,*  
he whispered. No sound out of this

horse – big nostrils, eyes that see  
in the dark, neck stretched forward

without reins. He's the Steel-Blue  
Serpentine Horse. I've heard his hoofbeats through the woods.  
I know his rider's waiting out there

in the real world. I know  
they both know the way.

- Susan Landgraf



Inspired by Leo Kenney's *Crystal Ship II*. MoNA, gift of the Blaire and Lucille Kirk Collection.

### The Crystal Ship

Sail not to the coral sea or Bali  
not to Peru or Charleston Bay  
but galactic –  
sail away, sail away

out to where the world began  
and is beginning –  
luminous circles, pulsations  
vibrations, hexagons

in this new light speed  
fuchsia blue, lollipop green  
shape-shifted – imaged  
angled and reflected, this

crystal ship and me in space  
without a space suit.

Susan Landgraf



Inspired by *Trees* by Joseph Gregory Rossano. MoNA, gift of the Artist and Rossano Studio.

### Wondering about Trees

Dear Joseph,  
Did you know  
The fine-grained, honey-colored wood board  
Came to the World  
Fed by red alder?

On the wood  
Is the B&W print of slender alders,  
A grove in winter,  
Bare branches,  
Roots exposed on the cutbank.

Did you suggest  
Below-ground entanglements  
Transporting nitrogen  
Fixed just right by alder's  
Bacteria-friend Frankia,  
Essential nutrient--  
Moved from alder to Douglas-fir?

You suspended three  
Old-growth trees  
Of crystal-clear fired glass  
Inches above the warm-colored board.  
Delicate human-made trees throw  
Three tree shadows:  
Conifer branches, thick trunk, and root base,.

Centuries to millennia  
Spotted owls and marbled murrelets build nests  
Generations of red tree voles live their lives  
Mosses and lichens find substrate  
Insects hum.

Joseph, surely across your own decades  
You smelled the soil,  
Touched the rough, brown-gray bark,  
Tripped on the roots hidden just rising above the surface.

Thought of the salty sweat day-in, day-out  
For those who cut the trees  
Money earned for schooling, housing, eating.  
Until in a blink of an eye only 1 in 10 trees remained.  
And then people collectively paused.

When you finished Trees  
Old-growth reserves were new.  
People painting, photographing, documenting, counting.

Yet, droughts, fires, and still some big-bladed saws  
Took more.  
Joseph, did you know,  
Such trees would keep disappearing?

- Cindy Miner





***In Response to Joseph Gregory Rossano's "Coelodonta antiquitatis (Woolly Rhinoceros)"*** Loan courtesy of the Artist.

*A Haunting*

The portrait,  
a haunting:  
delicate eyelashes  
over ancient eyes  
uplifted  
beyond beseech.

In these eyes,  
as in her genes,  
a story spanning millennia,  
the supercontinent,  
Eurasia – as yet unclaimed.

Mythic in stature,  
the Woolly Rhino is rendered  
eternal on the walls  
of Stone Age caves –  
lyrical lines that  
belie its fate.

A being too well adapted  
to the harshest of climates –  
a landscape of ice sheets and  
tundra – a climate that  
abruptly ceased to exist;  
to a world that melted.

In a graveyard in Siberia  
lie the remains of the Woolly Rhino,  
preserved in permafrost;  
their genetic material harvested  
to determine their fate.  
And, perhaps, to extrapolate to ours.

Beneath the eyes,  
the mouth agape,  
a species, sentenced.  
– Nina Burokas



**Inspired by *St. Sebastian* by Joseph Gregory Rossano. Loan courtesy of the Artist.**

One arrow not enough...

two through the heart and neck

seven wounds in all,

this majestic iced giant still stands tall,

surviving as St. Sebastian after his arrow attack,

nursed and saved by St. Irene.

The polar bear, bastion of the wild,

icon of the lost or soon to be lost,

he is alive now,

but he is not saved.

Where are our modern day St. Irenes.

We need so many.

- Nan Harty



Inspired by *Clock* by Michael Knutson. MoNA, gift of the Artist.

### **Clock Song**

I ask the wall clock to play back my story,  
    rectangular prisms spill out,  
    angular chunks of bold color  
    like awkward, music boxes,  
    each box locking away a secret  
    melody, a fragile memory,  
I need some order, ducklings lined up in a row bobbing  
on the water, my life ticking by in regular intervals,  
Not scrambled shards of a Kaleidoscope that shuffle  
and shift with every twist of my memory,

the shadow on the sundial face grows,

I try to find that one music box, to open that one moment,  
to hear again the song that closes the show  
as red velvet curtains slump to the stage floor,  
I'm not even sure it really happened, but my heart believes,  
my mind fills in, I want to hear it play again, just one more time...  
    you are my sunshine,  
    you make me happy,  
    please don't take,  
    please don't take,

and when I find it, the clock can stop.



Inspired by *La Siempre Viva de Clayton* by William Slater. MoNA, gift of the Estate of Susan Parke.

## Container

a memory rises of a baby grand  
ebony against a Dover-white wall

the wall filled  
with an abstract oil-on-canvas that suggests

a silent heavy-flake snowstorm  
and the beam of an unseen traveling car

heralding a frozen moment of light  
like honey topaz dazzling

this the entrance to Jane's house  
next to Hidden Beach

she who held in her diminutive lap  
the lanky daughter almost grown

when words and tears  
weren't enough

she who woke me to mother-child connections  
unknown in my mother's house

then a second memory drifts  
from another part of my brain

an early summer morning  
and I sit on a picnic table bench still wet from dew

in the ways of the Kutzadika'a, Sierra Miwok, and Pomo  
i am weaving my first not-very-good basket

too small to hold much – the size of a half dollar  
too loose to prevent leaks

coiled grasses with a clockspring start  
revolving to the right In the shape of a nautilus

slanted rim of grass-thin strips of sedge root  
overstitched with the use of my awl

materials gathered  
by the teacher

while for my part  
three days

long  
with rigorous focus

i am taught that the first basket  
must be given away (no matter how shamefully accomplished)

tradition that the weaver will practice and earn those fine stitching skills  
tradition that she will value generosity and community over her own ego

i am taught that a basket may be called  
container, *ossa*, *hupulu*, *pik'a*

holding  
letting go

like a woman's body  
like a memory

- Sheila deShields



Inspired by *Viola's Mandolin* by Spencer Mosley. MoNA, gift of Ronald D. Childers and Richard M. Proctor

### Geometries of Color

In the center there is light  
Radiating color  
The orange, blue, purple and pink vibrant  
Juxtaposed by the white  
And in the middle, the heart center  
The yellow, like an egg melting and molting  
Tipping the scales and blurring the symmetry  
Isn't this how it always is  
Our ordered lives like geometric shapes  
Right angles and triangles leading from one point to another  
Disrupted and disturbed  
Perhaps it is only the angle of the lines  
Or the fan blowing air the wrong way  
Or the breaking of a mandolin string  
Yet, it could be even more sinister  
Like family secrets emerging from the shadows  
color not enough to out sparkle genealogy  
Does the dark side always win

- Lesly L Sanocki- Poets on the Coast September 2024





Inspired by *Spirit Bird* by Morris Graves. MoNA, gift of The Catterall Collection.

### Spirit Bird

Spirit bird, I see you. Your blue fear is clear from afar. You are the knowledge of death in the mind of a summertime child. She has fed on cinnamon Jolly Ranchers all through the muggy evening, and now everything is too hot for sleep.

I see you. You are frightened of departures and stare and stare with your gray Life Saver eyes. The child creeps down the darkened hallway to the bright kitchen, where her mother smokes and reads at the counter, a stain of wine in a glass beside her. The child states her mind: she does not want to die.

The child's mother is languid and unconcerned. Cigarette smoke twirls into a malaise under the fluorescent lights. "You don't have to worry about that. You won't die for a very long time."

Spirit Bird, I know you, hunkering there atop the raft of your long, taloned feet.

I want to hold you. Honest fear shimmers blue. The child retreats through air sticky like candy on the lips, over the hallway's wooden planks to her room and her bed, which is now a coffin. But morning comes.

Spirit Bird, what do you see? You are bird and egg, or you are a bird who knows he will return to egg. The distant gumball sun shines dim from a dirty haze.

- Stacey Danner