

# Wisconsin poets at the Elvehjem Museum of Art.

Madison, Wisconsin: Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995

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# WISCONSIN POETS at the

## ELVEHJEM MUSEUM OF ART





Kohler Art Library
University of Wisconsin - Madison
260 Elvehjem Museum of Art
800 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706-1479

# Wisconsin Poets

at the

### ELVEHJEM MUSEUM OF ART



Elvehjem Museum of Art University of Wisconsin-Madison 1995



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On the cover: George William Russell (called Æ) (Irish, 1867–1935), Children Dancing on the Strand, before 1914, oil on canvas,  $17\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{1}{2}$  in., Elvehjem Museum of Art, Gift of Patrick Cudahy, 14.1.4

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#### **FOREWORD**

Aristotle was probably the first to propose a comparison between poetry and painting. He and other ancients considered these two art forms to be the most important and the most worthy of practice and discussion because more than other art forms they were capable of imitating human action. Poetry and painting were perceived as almost identical in nature, in content, and in purpose, differing only in their means and manner of expression.

Ever since, *ut pictura poesis* (as is painting so is poetry), as this concept was later called in Latin, has played a vital role in the development of artistic and literary theory throughout western history.

On various occasions, the theoretical relation between the written word and visual imagery has even moved beyond discussion into actual practice. Numerous authors over the centuries have derived inspiration from paintings. Ekphrasis, or description, in the second century A.D. was the rhetorical exercise of creating mental images through words and frequently began with a description of existing works of art. Since the seventeenth century, poets have written "concrete poems," in which the words were arranged on the page to form an image or visual pattern. On the other hand, it is well documented that painters have on many occasions attempted to translate literary images onto canvas. The present volume draws its inspiration from this long and venerable tradition.

Appropriately, the publication of *Wisconsin Poets at the Elvehjem Museum of Art* coincides with the celebration of the Elvehjem's twenty-fifth anniversary. The combination of elements and the way they came together to produce this publication effectively symbolize the museum's continuing role within our community: the art collection, dedicated museum volunteers, the intellectual and technical resources of the university, all

stimulating and encouraging the creative impulses of yet another generation of artists.

The origins of *Wisconsin Poets at the Elvehjem Museum of Art* go back to February, 1992. Two of our most dedicated volunteers, Beatrice Lindberg and Sybil Robinson, searching for new ways to teach art appreciation to museum visitors, organized a gallery tour and poetry reading called "Poetry about Art." Focusing on popular works in the permanent collection, Ms. Lindberg gave an art historical introduction to each piece which was followed by a relevant poem read by Professor Robinson.

Public response to the initial program was very enthusiastic, and more such programs were demanded. The one hurdle to be overcome, however, was that not enough existing poems related to the works on display in the museum's galleries. This made the educational goals of the program difficult to achieve. The two unusually enterprising docents responded by inviting individual poets as well as members of poetry societies such as the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, Cheap at Any Price Poets, and Root River Poets to compose new work on objects in the museum's collection.

Over the course of the next three years, poets from around the state visited the museum and selected an object on view which they personally found inspirational. Over one hundred and fifty new poems were produced in this manner and submitted to the museum for use in the poetry and art program. The overall quality of the writing was exceptionally high, and public response to the readings was so overwhelming that eight additional public poetry and art programs were held. Many of the poets had traveled long distances before writing their poems and then returned to hear their poems read. Subsequently, additional readings were broadcast throughout the state on Wisconsin Public Radio.

"Poetry about Art" attracted poems of such high quality that the decision to publish was inevitable. Unfortunately, the financial implications of such a publication precluded including all of them. A selection committee was formed and put under the able guidance of Ronald W. Wallace, director of the program in creative writing at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The group consisted of Anne Lambert, curator of education, and Pat Powell, editor, Elvehjem Museum of Art; Bea Lindberg and Sybil Robinson, initiators and presenters of "Poetry about Art." Although literary merit was an important criterion in the selection process, it was not the only one. The committee also gave much consideration to those works which, in their view, best exemplified the purpose of the program, that is, poetry inspired by an encounter with a work of art in the Elvehjem's permanent collection. The final selection only includes one work by any given poet although several individuals submitted more than one. Also, only one poem about any single work of art was selected although in several instances more than one poet focused on the same painting. Thus not all the poems considered of significant literary merit have been published. The present publication only includes thirty-two poems by thirty-two poets about thirty-two different artworks in the museum. It is also interesting to note that the poets selected represent ten Wisconsin cities, including Appleton, LaCrosse, Madison, Milwaukee, and Racine.

Because poetry is an aural as well as a visual art, an audiotape with readings of the published poems by Sybil Robinson, emerita professor, and John Staniunas, assistant professor, both of theater and drama at UW-Madison, was produced and is available. Thus the book can stand alone or can be used with the tape as an audio poetry and art guide to the museum collection.

In addition to those contributions to this project mentioned above, I would like to acknowledge the valuable work of Jim A. Escalante, associate professor of art at UW-Madison, who designed this elegant volume; of Anne Lambert, our curator of education, whose on-going task it is to nurture such an outstanding group of docents; of Greg Anderson, UW-Madison Photographic Media Center, who produced these excellent photographs; and of Pat Powell, our editor, without whose efforts this publication could not have been realized.

Thanks are also offered to all of the poets who submitted work to the poetry and art program. These talented writers have brought the pen and the brush together at the Elvehjem Museum of Art and once again delved into an exploration of the age-old link between painting and poetry. We regret very much not being able to publish all of your wonderful creative efforts.

Funding was generously provided by the Evjue Foundation/The Capital Times and by the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission.

Russell Panzcenko Director

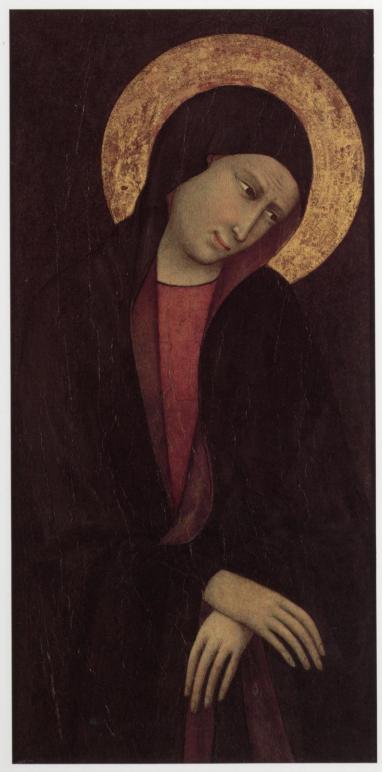


Unknown Indian (Pala Period, 730–1086), *Dancing Ganesa*, 11th century, carved black stone, 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. H. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse, 1972.27

#### **Exercise**

- Whoever said an elephant can't dance has never seen good old Ganesa prance.
- With a long trunk and all those arms to boot, Ganesa doesn't even miss his foot.
- Amazing what this elephant can do—and with imagination, so can you.
- Try. Go ahead. Pretend you're standing flat on one dime.
- Now scratch yourself in seven places at the same time.

Mel Koronelos



Andrea Vanni (Italian, 1332–1414), *The Mourning Madonna*, ca. 1375, tempera and gilt on panel, 21% x 10% in. Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 61.4.10

#### The Mourning Madonna

The hands are self bound.

She unconsciously remembers her son's.

What is there to do with brute demolition

but submit

and become the ellipsis of grief?

We tiptoe around this pure example,

set off by the embossed halo,

with the mourning colors of moss-green and marble-pink in her face,

her dress lined with the violet opening of one's veins,

its coral mantling the intense and private interiors of the body's flesh—

He has done well to portray the chastity of her sorrow

with the eloquent poverty of tempera upon wood.

Mary Gallagher Price



Colijn de Coter (Flemish, ca. 1455–ca. 1540), Bernatsky Triptych: The Lamentation, ca. 1500-1510, oil on panel,  $41\frac{1}{2} \times 29\frac{1}{8}$  in. (center panel). Gift of Charles R. Crane, 13.1.1

#### **Pietà**

His flesh transforms to ash—His mother's, just the same.

His father's knobby hands curve up At the end of *His* long arms, like hand-carved

Wooden spades. A young man cries, "Oh no, Oh no!," but the elders have resigned themselves

To this. The women gather, pious as nuns, Yet curious, beside the young mother

Who still does not believe Her son can feel this cold:

She cradles His neck in the palm of her hand So His head won't fall back—so He might stand again

On less treacherous ground.

While the thieves still hover On their crosses, black clouds gather:

The women stand ready To perfume and wash the body,

But the mother leans, frozen in a pose, Unable to give this precious gift again—

Unable to believe She must.

Elaine Cavanaugh



Anthonie Palamedesz (Dutch, 1600–1673), *The Musical Company*, ca. 1635, oil on panel,  $17\frac{3}{4}$  x 24 in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Marc B. Rojtman, 62.1.2

#### **A Musical Company**

Flinging off a red wrap and not bothering to remove their hats, the musicians tune up promptly. Music thrown down on a bench, books passed to the ladies of the house. Resplendent in voluminous dresses fancy lace collars, they trill a lively tune, as a small hand beats time. Their efforts, not too offensive, the dog refrains from howling.

A strange group a bass viol, violin, voices. Rock and roll bands centuries away. The company—long silenced. Perhaps the gold of their clothes gives off glissandos, the orange sash and plume perform pizzicatos, the vermilion vibrates voice tremolos, the pink shoe bow beeps a grace note in the song of color.

Phyllis Reisdorf



Peter Lely (English, b. Germany, 1618–1680), *Thomas Butler, Earl of Ossory, First Duke of Ormonde*, ca. 1675, oil on canvas, 90 x 52½ in. Gift of Charlotte C. Gregory, 64.15.15

#### **Introductory Comments by Sir Thomas Butler of Offrey**

I,
Thomas Butler—
Earl of Offrey,
First Duke of Ormonde—
I,
Gift of Miss Gregory
and Model for Peter of the Flowered Name,
bid you
"Well come to the Elvehjem Museum of Art."

Looking down upon you, indeed, a Sensuous Sentry of Note, a Master of Wit as I "draw" your attention to this wonderful wig so delicately framing my magnificence (and matching my eyebrows) these piercing eyes that capture your gaze (wherever in my presence you may be) that proboscis of noble length (satisfying rumors of another large appendage) and the hairy accents of masculinity (which separate these fabled "luscious lips of experience"). Envious sir or stirred madam, you may worship at the Altar of Perfection . . . marvel at the Displayed Magnificence . . . swoon over "That Which You May Not Touch" . . . but you may not take this garb for granted! You may not dismiss each piece (so carefully selected) each piece that dresses and drapes the priest for his sacrificial lambsthe dangling tassels of braided gold, the lace, ribbons, satin, velvet, pearls, and jewels, the shoes with silvered buckles and well-stacked heels. the undergarments of raw silk and imported linen . . . each piece (so carefully selected) each piece so prized as it augments man to Divine. I. Thomas Butler, rightfully bathed in a halo of light I, Thomas Butler, with plumed hat resting within reach (ready to cap this Man Among Men) I, Thomas Butler, bid you "Fare well."

(You have seen the peacock, now you may visit the hens.)

Mary Louise Frary



Giuseppe Angeli (Italian, 1710–1798), Sleeping Country Girl, ca. 1745-1755, oil on canvas,  $31\frac{1}{4}$  x 24 in. Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 61.4.2

#### **Sleeping Country Girl**

Let's recall what It is like to be Completely at ease. I forget myself, But she knows.

You see she closes Her eyes to The circle of Threatening clouds.

Perhaps she even Keeps them at bay, Pulling the sun through By the strength Of her trust.

Having basketed Celery and cabbage, She contents herself. Who needs anything more?

Vulnerable and unafraid Her fingers curl inward Like a baby's. She draws Her breath unimpeded. Who would dare touch her?

Let's hush. Unless We would wake her And send her out To make a name For herself.

Margaret Rozga



Gilbert Stuart (American, 1755–1828), Mrs. Aaron Davis, ca. 1816, oil on panel, 28% x 23 in. Max W. Zabel Fund purchase, 68.5.2

#### To Gilbert Stuart from His Subject

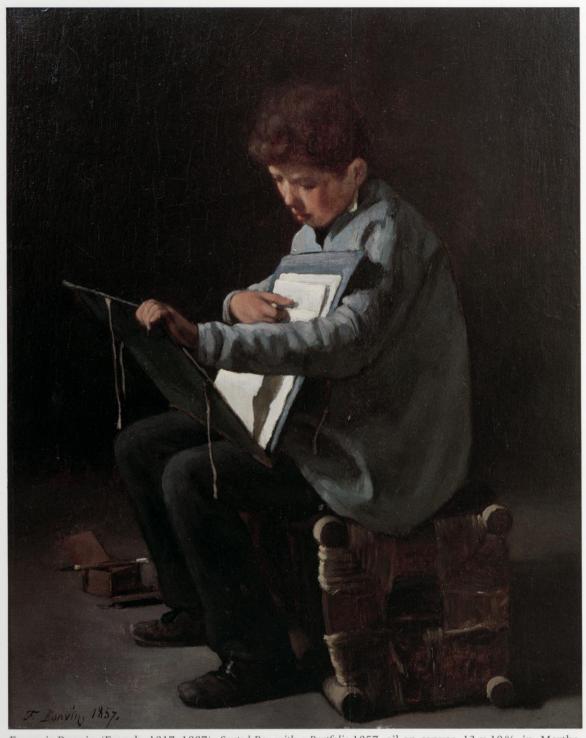
You amuse me as you struggle to ensnare my eyebrow's arch or trace precisely what space lies between my nose and lip.
Concentrating so on parts, you never see the whole or grasp the meaning of the tiny smile I wear for you.

You do not know—or care—if my name be Elizabeth or Patience, Prudence, Martha, Mary, Jane . . . Aaron Davis paid for this commission, so I will be recorded for eternity as merely your old client's dark-eyed wife.

My revenge for anonymity will be that I remain in it—nameless, void of both a dream or an accomplishment the world can learn. Did I love someone else before I wed—have I loved someone since? I will not say. Have I been wicked or angelic, cold, devoted, spiteful, rigid, wild? No one will know.

I seal my lips together firmly, look at you with wise eyes saying, "Guess," assume a mystery for posterity.

Jo Bartels Alderson



François Bonvin (French, 1817–1887), Seated Boy with a Portfolio, 1857, oil on canvas,  $13 \times 10\%$  in. Martha Renk Fund purchase, 1982.57

#### Seated Boy with a Portfolio

That fifteen-year-old look so like your own: bent shoulders, loose shirt draped around slender body. His tired, black shoes meet proper black pants. Your brand-new white Nikes brush faded jeans.

But it's his face, framed by swirls of black hair, that captures me, reminds me of you.

You almost finished a self-portrait, coaxed pansy faces alive, settled songbirds on delicate twigs.

His brush lies silent as he studies the portfolio. Do his pastels let daffodils dance, allow maples to scan the sky?

It's his face that captures me, so like your own, the face some girl will love, the face I'll cherish without Bonvin's painting.

Kay Saunders



Severin Roesen (American, ca. 1815–1872), Still Life with Watermelon, ca. 1858–1871, oil on canvas,  $29 \times 36 \%$  in. Max W. Zabel Fund purchase, 68.22.1

#### Still Life with Watermelon

Even before Roesen painted his masterpiece it was a work of art, strawberries tumbling from artfully tipped wicker, that wine glass, how well placed, those grapes someone snipped slantingly from the vine, how cleverly they are clustered with cherries among the larger fruited globes.

But it was his brush made the velvet-skinned peaches glow like setting suns, the leathery rinded orange gleam like fish scales; his brush that dusted the cool purple plums and smoothed the nectarines, glistened the sliced lemon and dotted the watermelon's black seeds into their crevices as randomly as nature. It was his brush, you must believe me, wound that escaping tendril into his signature, and munched those holes in that otherwise perfect leaf.

Karen Updike



Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (French, 1796–1875), *Orpheus Greeting the Dawn*, 1865, oil on canvas,  $78\frac{1}{4} \times 54$  in. Gift in memory of Earl William and Eugenia Brandt Quirk, Class of 1910, by their children, 1981.136

#### **Orpheus Greeting the Dawn**

To get into my landscapes you need to have the patience to wait for the haze to lift; you can enter them only by slow degrees.

Corot

This colossal tree Oppresses. The sky runs from the wind. A gray and silver opalescent light Is spreading from behind a distant temple To summon Orpheus to this woodland rite.

Leaving the dim path, turning to Aurora, He greets her early: Dawn is yet half-dressed. Poised at his full height he lifts the lyre, And lifts the hand that is to make its music, Serene, attending Apollo's benediction In absolute expectancy. This is The offered moment, confluence of power.

And now a sapling, close to Orpheus, Curving toward the Dawn, receives its leaves Bold as birds alighting, green and gold Like little lyres themselves. Now at his side Pinpoints of rose appear on a wild bush.

Orpheus the singer—we knew he brought the trees And flowers to life: we heard it all in childhood. What we now know, the haze having risen, is how.

Josephine M. Zell



Adolphe-William Bouguereau (French, 1825–1905), Little Girl with Basket of Apples, 1897, oil on canvas,  $25\% \times 20\%$  in. Bequest of Harry Steenbock, 69.5.2

#### Little Girl with Basket of Apples

across the room you seem to glow calling to me silently those pale brown eyes cast shyly upward softly beguiling on this summer day small green apples by your side

vision of the past recalling innocence a season without edges bringing forward one sweet moment to rebuke these coarser times

silken ribbon in your hair sets off its soft brown color subtly points out reddened cheeks faintest track of tears the mouth a little wary

behind that smile do I see sorrow more profound than apple's ache? do little girls whatever era cry more often than we know?

Pat Kardas



Alma Erdmann (German, 1872–1930), At the Fortune Tellers, 1900, oil on canvas, 50 x 52 in. Gift of Charles R. Crane, 19.1.2

#### The Moment before Speaking

While one century gives way to the next, three women await change. The seer and the maiden exchange gazes. One looks at vesterday, one at tomorrow. The Fortune Teller reads the girl's lot from living her own. Studies the maid's face as much as the cards. Though the young be deaf to guidance, she will counsel the child with all that she knows. The scent of their peppermint tea permeates the plain wood of the room. The companion of the girl stands awhirl with impatience. The tick of the clock is all that breaks their silence. But this moment holds still, the one before speaking. What will be told, what held back?

Sue Silvermarie



Homer Boss (American, 1882–1956), *Young Woman in Black*, ca. 1909–1910, oil on canvas,  $74 \times 35\%$  in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jon G. Udell in memory of Suzanne and Homer Boss, 1978.18

#### Young Woman in Black

What do you expect of me? I have come thousands of miles, worked this land alongside you, borne four children to carry your name down eternity's pathways while my name is lost in the winds of time, yet still you want more!

Your look severs each tie that bound us, your voice wrings me dry. Each morning I rise and listen for the meadowlark—you kill its song in my ears. I stand on your land; my sweat has watered its harvest but I do not profit—you carry away the fruits.

Now it is time for me to walk away; you can work the fields alone, sit at your table alone. I'll sing with the meadowlark, plant a garden, make dandelion wine.

Charlotte A. Cote



George William Russell (called  $\cancel{E}$ ) (Irish, 1867–1935), *Children Dancing on the Strand*, before 1914, oil on canvas,  $17\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{1}{2}$  in. Gift of Patrick Cudahy, 14.1.4

#### To the Children Dancing on the Strand

Not everyone walking that stretch of beach would succumb to the moon with such abandon, slender legs kicking the air, arms flung wide.

White dresses capture light, one pale pink sash tells a tender waist, blue on blue is sky and lake. Everyone's hair floats on the wind.

Who could name the steps? The girl in the foreground seems to point a ballet toe. Those partners, holding hands, might be dancing a fandango on the golden sand.

Caught forever in the early dusk, the artist paints, the children dance.

Helen Fahrbach



Edward McCartan (American, 1878–1947), *Diana*, 1923, cast bronze, 23 in. H. Gift of Mrs. Robert E. Friend, 64.6.1

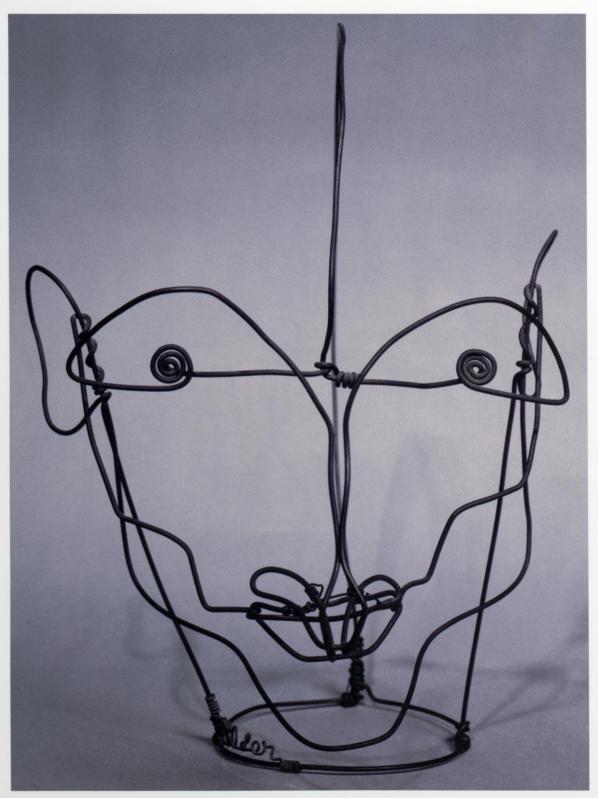
### I Am Artemis/ I Am Actaeon

I am Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt and of the Moon. I turned Actaeon into a stag, Slain by his own hounds, when he came upon me Bathing in my favorite mountain stream. Let this be a warning to all men whose eyes Violate the sanctity of a goddess.

I am Actaeon, hunter and hunted,
Who learned before he died as a beast,
What a goddess looked like bare.
She looked like a statue ten feet tall,
Made of marble and beautiful beyond speaking,
But terrifying in her frozen virginity.
She held me in her gaze; I could not avert my eyes
From her massive nudity.
Then the stag-form began to reweave
My nerves and muscles;

I screamed in pain Until a heavy unawareness, Broken only by the cry of distant dogs, Crept over me, And I was no longer myself.

L. S. Dembo



Alexander Calder (American, 1898–1976), *Head of Michel Tapie*, ca. 1930, wire, 12% H. Bequest of Alexander and Henrietta W. Hollaender, 1992.310

# Rebuilding the Head of Michel Tapie

Your head is old a hard vine twisting from the center of the earth It speaks the language of scaffolding Tonight I watch your mother walk across the bridge

of your forehead a frozen arc a dolphin rising from water She carries pliers in her pocket as though she might change the shape of your life as if the half circle of your eye

is really a door she can open can lean against to study double-looped rooms where you no longer live She wanted you to be a doctor like your

father not this bundle of wire not this metal armature much too fragile to hold the weight of bone and flesh She bends slightly into

the apparatus of your ear turns carefully to avoid thornsharp edges She does not understand how this intricate cage of your head can be filled with sky can hold the thankfulness of moon

Ellen Kort



Grant Wood (American, 1892–1942), Portrait of Nan, ca. 1933, oil on masonite,  $34\frac{1}{2}$  x  $28\frac{1}{2}$  in. Courtesy of the Collection of William Benton

# Talking Back to a Portrait Hanging on the Wall

Nan, you are sunday morning in the french quarter your eyes tell me you spent the night at Napoleons sitting next to a window with no glass drinking some kind of whiskey while that guy with the dark skin played a saxophone in the corner. This painter sat across from you bought you drinks asked about Natchez and why did you drop out of Tulane?

Summer is slow iced coffee goes down like an elixir ceiling fans hypnotize and that man on the corner who calls himself a chessmaster talks of going up north to the resorts in the Catskills where you should be. Instead, you let yourself become beguiled by this funny, little man calling himself an artist, trying to get you into bed begging to paint you.

Now, on sunday morning in the french quarter you sit in his studio listening to his whiskey filled sighs and the swirling fan above you're just about to smile when he says, "hold it."

You're no Mona Lisa, Nan crimped blond hair is sassy and polka dots too bold to seduce but he painted you anyway, even gave you a baby chick to hold in your palm while you held in laughter on sunday morning in the french quarter.

Cate Riedl



Pavel Sokolov-Skalya (Russian, 1899–1961), Red Army in the Don Basin, before 1937, oil on canvas,  $46 \times 59$  in. Gift of Joseph E. Davies, 37.2.47

### Red Army in the Don Basin

These four figures, here in the corner: is it the passage of time that has caused them to turn their backs on the scene? The red flag flares over the general, proud in his greatcoat, reining his rearing steed. Cossacks in fur hats and homespun follow in ranks, victory theirs, the sky clearing, storm clouds retreating, lances unfurling red pennants into the blue forever—

In the distance, olive drab soldiers stand guard on tanks boxy as pedestals. Industrial fires burn: a steel mill throbs, its workers mass to welcome the horseback general into the modern age. Then why is this *babushka* kneeling, or near collapse? Is her husband dead? Is she ill? She falls into someone's arms, her daughter's perhaps; the fierce-eyed young woman consoles her and two peasant friends who look on. Behind them, a horse noses for grass in the snow-covered, boot-trodden ground.

Judith Strasser



Max Ernst (French, b. Germany, 1891–1976), Janus, bronze,  $17\frac{1}{2}$  in. H. Bequest of Alexander and Henrietta W. Hollaender, 1992.215

### Janus

I.

Doublefaced sentry, burdened into door itself, budgeless, mute archway of indecision.

II.

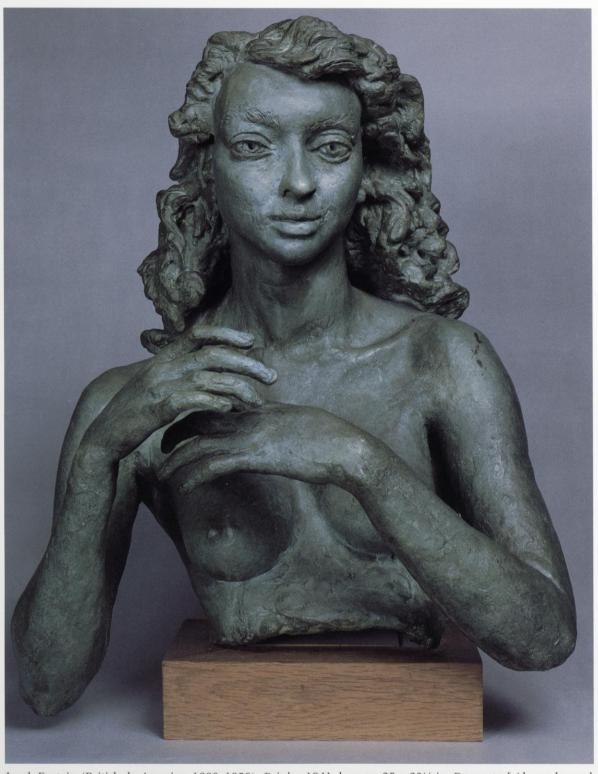
She sits on edge in a room grown strange in her absence.

Plaid flannel inches near, the old embrace, their two faces once more opposite.

III.

Wide eyed duck, islanded between river and land, face frozen in an incessant "Oh!" the comic shape of another beginning.

Cristine Berg Prucha



Jacob Epstein (British, b. America, 1880–1959), *Deirdre*, 1941, bronze,  $25 \times 23\%$  in. Bequest of Alexander and Henrietta W. Hollaender, 1992.218

### **Deirdre**

What did that sculptor see in you, Deirdre, and has he truly captured you waiting for Noisiu, warding off that king whose evil heart you stirred to your undoing? Or is this really Eve just at the moment she sees that she is naked by the new gleam in Adam's eye?

No, forget that.
She is after all the forest, not the garden.
Those deep-set eyes want to keep their secret.
She does not want us to look at her.
Alas, I see those hands outstretched toward the last butterfly at Terezin.

Bea Cameron



Eugene Brands (Dutch, b. 1913), *Demon of Shipwrecks*, 1951, oil on canvas, 39% x 23% in. Gift of Alexander and Henrietta W. Hollaender, 1981.254

# **Demon of Shipwrecks**

He stands, a high-heeled warrior's boot on each black chimney of the doomed ship, his right hand raised, alert, ready to give the go-ahead, his mouth agrin with foreplay satisfaction; the greenblue waves still peaceful beneath a darkening full moon. As he starts moving the silent vessel, his weight swinging from side to side, a hand appears out of a cabin. Saluting? Begging? Waving in great alarm? It is his own left arm, cut off his rotund body, signaling all is well down there, prepared for surprise sinking: the crew asleep, the captain's foggy head bent deep over a book and drinks. Only two lit-up portholes signs of life: an owl's nightpiercing eyes without his warning hoots.

And now the Shipwreck Demon begins that treacherous plunge as fast, as nearly perfect as he knows how: the unexpected squall, the gale strength winds, the ship capsizing . . .

All of a sudden I see my great-grandfather's face, who on a stormy night so many years ago went to the bottom of the Chinese Sea with his Dutch wife, his ship, all hands aboard, leaving four children orphaned.

Iefke Goldberger



Antonio Tapies (Spanish, b. 1923), Crackled White, 1956, mixed media,  $30\frac{3}{4} \times 39$  in. Bequest of Alexander and Henrietta W. Hollaender, 1992.196

# My Handkerchief

Wrinkled tattered weary fabric. Where did you find it?

I am astonished at the precise detail of the surviving corner, edges torn into bandages in the war.

Hems severely battered and wrenched trapezoidal patch heavy with battle grease cat claw marks cigarette burns and sand.

Circular mark of its one time ironing by a pan fresh off the fire.

K-ration stains devoured by infrequent cold water washes in rancid pools.

No Cheer.

Richard A. Loescher



Hans Hofmann (American, b. Germany, 1880–1966), *August Light*, 1957, oil on canvas, 52 x 601/8 in. Bequest of Alexander and Henrietta W. Hollaender, 1992.168

# Landscape with Heart: Hans Hofmann in Manhattan

Above the slate-gray skyscrapers clouds are pinwheeling a deep indigo. Rain flogs the windows; it's Manhattan, 1940, and Hofmann has just awakened from a dream of an enormous heart.

Alizarin red, he thinks, picturing a new canvas with the heart off-center, a primal red, like the insides of a lacquered jewelbox.

He closes his eyes and the heart reappears, throbbing, its color deepening to magenta and the ropes of veins, blue as the throat of a morning glory, until they are severed, and the blood spurts raw sienna.

Hofmann has never seen the inside of a human body but once as a boy visiting his grandfather in Bavaria

he stepped from his bicycle into the doorway of a barn and watched from the shadows as a farmer pulled ropes of foamy milk from the teats of his Guernsey, the milk

streaming into a silver bucket. In the speckled barnlight, the cow is a sheen of caramel and white, the farmer, half-tones of fawn and gray, the sprays of ivory milk matching exactly the surrounding fields of hops.

Later that day, the young Hofmann will pedal down to the canal where sleepy barges thread their way up the black water. Now, in this moment, Hofmann is lost to memory: pale milk and August sun!

Turning to his window above 8th Avenue, he wonders how to render this city's heart. Below him, a yellow sign flashes in the rain, but his mind keeps skipping

back to the fields outside of Weissenberg with its seasons of sleet and mud, the slow cresting of spring like a woman aroused

for the first time. Here in New York it's late summer. When the rain stops the city will be a hopscotch of whites and grays dabbed with olive-colored faces, small children dressed in lilac and mauve. *No*,

I will not paint the representational.

I paint what is real: red heart balanced by ocher sun.

Milk and blood. The fierce green engine
flowing in a constant chug.

Dale Kushner



Lee Bontecou (American, b. 1931), Untitled, 1961, welded steel with canvas, 28½ in. H. National Endowment for the Arts Fund, Edna G. Dyar Fund, and Humanistic Foundation Fund purchase, 1973.5

### The Greening

We lived in caves Licked the water which ran down. Others had thick houses, drank water de-salted, wore thick sun-goggles, We laughed when they got skin cancer, White was better.

We told tales by the hearth of sun-heated rocks, Fire was not needed.
A great oral tradition grew up,
Sagas about olden days when the sky was blue Rather than gold.

Solar power ran everything.
Food was very scarce, we ate mushrooms.
The salty sea had killed most fish,
But the rich were keeping a few cows.
We never knew where they got the forage.
Some believed that the cows could eat meat,
But most of the meat was human.
Tales ran rife around the dark hearth.

Fran Rall



Jack Tworkov (American, 1900–1982), Barrier Series No. 4 (diptych), 1961, oil on canvas,  $94 \times 75\frac{1}{2}$  in. (each panel) Gift of the artist and the Dr. C. V. Kierzkowski Fund purchase, 67.12.1

### **Face**

On the other side there must be a face— Flush with exertion perhaps— Who wears it has paused to catch a breath leaning against the dark red barrier which is rough like the unshaven cheek of a prisoner

The face is familiar (if one could see it) The eyes' shape The nose The squareness in the jaw

And of course the expression dog-tired lonely a little fearful

Steve Timm



Charles Burchfield (American, 1883-1967), Migration of Butterflies by Moonlight, 1963, watercolor on paper, 32 x 39 in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Newman T. Halvorson, 1980.57

# Migration of Butterflies by Moonlight

Where

a gothic window can be found among the

flowers while

on high

the intimation of

an angel

and her

moonlit smile

and arms

are beckoning

applauding the commotion

the confusion

that is

color

with its lesson and the

reason for the sky. And where

line

and hue aspire to be music in this

vast

and measured

place this

dazzled

fluttering space this

hush

then rush

of brush

uplifting wing

on wing

on wing

to climb

the tilting wind

and how

they are

escaping

every shadow

every

line and

definition in their

mad ascending

dance abandoning

as they

the

flowers

who are

bidding them

farewell.

Pell-

mell they tum-

ble skyward

lead

and tease

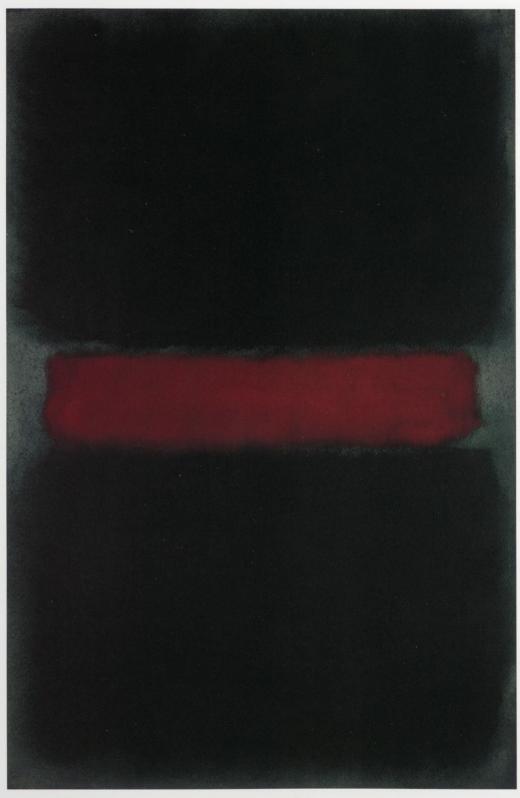
and draw

the eye the hand

that wrought them

into light.

Eve Larkin



Marc Rothko (American, b. Russia, 1903–1970), Untitled, 1968, tempera on paper mounted on linen,  $40\frac{1}{4}$  x  $26\frac{3}{8}$  in. Bequest of Alexander and Henrietta W. Hollaender, 1992.190

### Rothko

The paintings were of what wasn't there, as if of the shadow of air.

It smothered you like a pillow, or plastic, that air you painted, dark and drastic

as all absence, all loss. And we who live on, because

you painted it cannot avert our eyes. We see, everywhere, peripheries,

sharpened edges shading into something as sad as suicide, or painting nothing.

Kelly Cherry



Helen Frankenthaler (American, b. 1928), *Pistachio*, 1971, acrylic on canvas,  $109 \times 79\%$  in. Humanistic Foundation Fund and Thomas E. Brittingham Fund purchase, 71.32

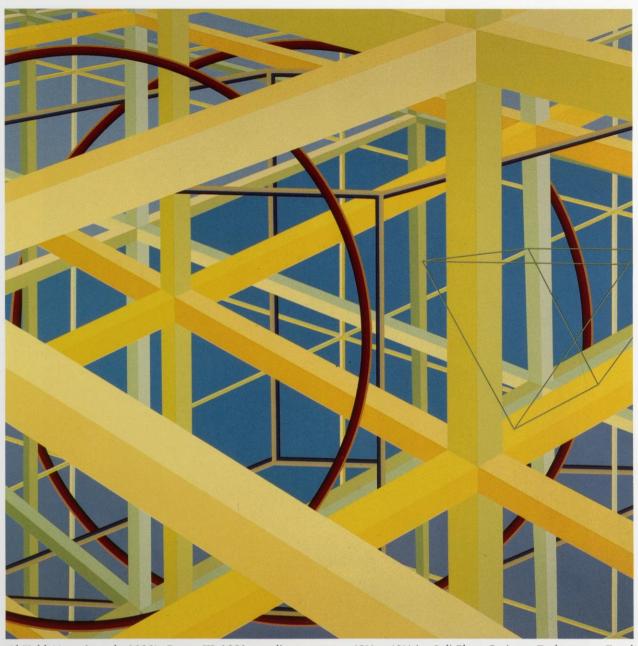
# This Painting Can't Be Reproduced

You have to stand in front of the monumental-sized original

to see its life stream(ing) female flow in pistachio its purple ribboned river that knows where we're going its blood sun orb moving slowly towards beginnings/ endings a flushing out a flowing through a coming too light breaking blood seeping

she has parted her legs
and paint has poured forth
pain has poured forth
from her, from you
opening the pores, parting your lips
breathless breath-filled
feel yourself wanting
to tongue the sheer deliciousness
of original vibrant color
on untouched canvas surface
moving and caught
still-flowing

Andrea Musher

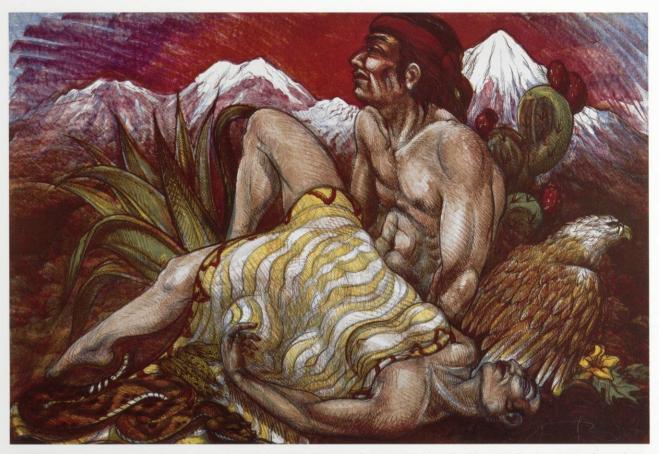


Al Held (American, b. 1928), *Bruges III*, 1981, acrylic on canvas,  $60\frac{1}{4} \times 60\frac{1}{8}$  in. Juli Plant Grainger Endowment Fund and Elvehjem Endowment Fund purchase, 1986.29

# Al Held's American Bruges III

You've been here:
when you were swingin' iron
when your Baby threw up on the roller coaster
that night before the geometry quiz
that year before they shot the old bridge out of the river
before the hamster died of a heart attack in his exercise wheel
only moments before the clouds left for the last time
just seconds before the mountains flattened themselves like a
burst boil
and you said,
"yellow has never done that before."

Jennifer Vaughan Jones



Luis Jimenez (American, b. 1940), Southwest Pietà, 1983, lithograph,  $30 \times 44\%$  in. Elvehjem Endowment Fund purchase, 1989.39

#### Southwest Pietà

The snake rattled its warning and has struck. It lies beside her quietly now, like a staff no longer needed. What do snakes know of a goddess suddenly become heavy and awkward?

How long will he sit there, her husk in his arms?
He holds her because his liquids have congealed, his limbs have turned to stone and he cannot rise.
He holds her because to do otherwise would be to admit there is no longer anything worth holding. His face is no more alive than hers or the eagle's.

Like the cluster of corncobs which have slipped from her fingers, tears, red with blood, drop from the cactus.

He holds her and waits for the sun to go out.

Phyllis Wax



Bernar Venet (French, b. 1941), *Undetermined Line*, 1985, charcoal and collage on paper,  $59\frac{1}{4} \times 72\frac{1}{4}$  in. Art Collections Fund purchase, 1986.26

### **Artistic License**

He's been drawing line after meaningless line since dawn. The studio floor is littered with frustration.

She enters his sanctuary, rabbit-quiet, careful, Her body ungainly with its unwanted burden.

You get the picture: naive student, Professor in need of creative transfusion, A too-fruitful liaison and a decision made too late. Give him credit: He's doing what's needful. But he saves his midnight thirsts for other victims.

She bends with awkward grace to clear away the papers Crumpled at his feet. She is a model of weariness and strength.

See how quickly he reduces her to charcoal and collage, How quickly he transforms her into undetermined line.

C. J. Muchhala



Michael C. McMillen (American, b. 1946), *Pico Escondido*, 1986, mixed-media construction, 31½ x 53½ in. Elvehjem Endowment Fund purchase, 1988.31. Photo: Douglas M. Parker, Los Angeles © 1987.

#### Pico Escondido

Where I grew up, water always left a stain. I remember each room was torn from the heart of another wall. how the wall embraced still more empty rooms, how the ceilings were also floors. The warehouse calling from a distance, like morning, has its roots there, plumbing strung beneath the floorboards and rising up the walls outside. exhausted and vulnerable as veins. In the evening when work is over, every step is a memory of another street that might open before my eyes, beneath umbrellas of dirty light switched on by a hand in another room. I could walk home. I could call out a name of no one I knew, bounce it down the street in a game that might lead me to an empty town, to the sounds of water dripping behind a wall from pipes that had broken faith with a design that could never end itself gracefully. I would grow old. I would find another job. I would paint these walls every day of my life, they would seem smaller, and the colors would streak with weather as anonymous as any wooden staircase without a handrail.

Rusty Russell

**Jo Bartels Alderson** has been a poet, dramatist, editor, and free-lance writer since 1960.

**Bea Cameron**, a long-time Madison resident, has published poetry in three languages.

In 1995 **Elaine Cavanaugh** read her poetry at Edgewood College for the 125th Annual Conference of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters and also at the 15th Anniversary Poetry Marathon at Woodland Pattern Book Center in Milwaukee.

**Kelly Cherry**'s newest books are *Writing the World*, essays and criticism, and *Lovers and Agnostics*, poems.

**Charlotte A. Cote** writes biographies of unsung heroines, most recently *Olympia Brown—The Battle for Equality*.

**L. S. Dembo**, emeritus professor of English at UW-Madison, has written several books on poetry and was editor-in-chief of the scholarly journal *Contemporary Literature*.

**Helen Fahrbach** is author of two chapbooks, *No One Rides the Carousel* and *A Thousand Journeys*.

**Mary Louise Frary** is an artist, advertising consultant, and mother who resides in Delafield, Wisconsin.

**Iefke Goldberger**, born in Barcelona, grew up in Holland during World War II, and is now working on a collection of war poems.

**Jennifer Vaughan Jones** (formerly McCorkle) is a regular reader with the Cheap-at-Any-Price poets.

**Pat Kardas** has been a poet all her life and has published a nonfiction book on video called *Cheap Shots*.

Mornings and afternoons **Mel Koronelos** is a UW-Madison political science professor; nights he writes and recites in scuzzy bars around the country.

**Ellen Kort**, a recipient of the Pablo Neruda Literary Prize, is the author of five books of poetry.

**Dale Kushner** is a writer and educator whose works have been published widely in literary journals; in 1988 she founded The Writers' Place for the Literary Arts in Madison, Wisconsin.

**Eve Larkin** is a children's librarian and an amateur watercolorist whose poetry and fiction have appeared in *The Madison Review, Great River Review, Midway Review,* and other magazines.

**Richard Loescher**, a retired business executive living in Appleton, started writing and publishing poems three years ago.

**C. J. Muchhala** is a school library media specialist in Menomonee Falls who recently published her first chapbook, *Traveling Without a Map*.

**Andrea Musher** holds a Ph.D. from UW-Madison and teaches English and women's studies at UW-Whitewater. She has published a collection, *The Rhythm Method Poems*, and her work appears in *Poetry for Life* and *Eleven Wisconsin Poets*.

**Mary Gallagher Price** is employed in a medical library, married and the mother of three sons, and is a member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets.

**Cristine Berg Prucha**, a librarian at Murphy Library, UW-LaCrosse, is a recent graduate of the Bread Loaf School of English. She has published in *South Coast Poetry Journal* and *Northeast*.

**Fran Rall**, a docent at the Elvehjem since 1971, publishes in the annual calendar of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. She is coauthor of *A Common Joy II* (1994), about outdoor art in Madison.

Exposure to Madison's lakes, music, theaters, art can result in the writing of poetry; it happened to **Phyllis Reisdorf**.

**Cate Riedl** is a Madison poet and short story writer. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Survival Graphics Calendar, Mobius,* and the Cheap-at-Any-Price poetry anthology, *A Choir on the Edge*.

**Margaret Rozga** is an associate professor of English at UW Center-Waukesha. Her work has appeared most recently in *BookLovers, The Lucid Stone,* and the anthology *Espresso Poetry*.

**R. Russell**, the coordinator of the Cheap-at-Any-Price Poets' Collective in Madison, has published both poetry and fiction in various regional magazines and in the anthology *The Glacier Stopped Here*.

**Kay Saunders** has published two books of poetry, *A Whippoorwill Calls for Memories* and *Only the Footprints Are Gone*; a work of nonfiction, *Gift of the Strangers*; and a children's book, *Pluck*.

**Sue Silvermarie**, poet, social worker, Certified Poetry Therapist, has been publishing and performing her work for twenty-five years.

**Judith Strasser** is a producer and interviewer for the nationally syndicated public radio program "To the Best of Our Knowledge." Her poems have recently appeared in *Poetry, Prairie Schooner*, and other publications.

**Steve Timm** lives in Belleville, Wisconsin, and has poems in *Fine Madness*, *Tight*, and *Paper Radio*.

**Karen Updike** teaches creative writing in Madison senior centers and has poems in several Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' calendars. She published *Sonja*, a book of poems, and *Off Writing*, a chapbook.

**Phyllis Wax** has been a teacher, editor, bookstore proprietor, gift shop/gallery manager. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Dreams and Secrets, Wisconsin Academy Review, Windfall*, and *Plainsongs*.

**Josephine M. Zell**, who teaches Latin and creative writing at Madison West High School, has been writing for about fifteen years.

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