



Thinking Inside the Box
the undrawn art of poet's heart

Portly Bard



Lorette C. Luzajic

Thinking Inside the Box
The Undrawn Art of Poet's Heart

Portly Bard and Lorette C. Luzajic

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Portly Bard:

To the present joys of my existence — my wife, my children and their families...

...and to my parents who so lovingly taught me the joys of critical understanding, analytical thought, ethical judgment, and creative expression...

...and to so many others along the way whose influence has been permanently etched by study, acquaintance, or kinship...

...and in particular to Lorette C. Luzajic, whose philanthropy and *undrawn art of poet's heart* has rekindled an inspiring fascination with the intersection of life, the precious gift of liberty, and the arts that become our cultural legacy.

Lorette C. Luzajic:

For all the readers, writers, and friends from *The Ekphrastic Review*, especially Portly, who made this possible

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Preface

***Collage as Art of Poet's Mind**

At first it troubled me to find
collage as art of poet's mind
so seeming in such disarray
as if all hope had given way...

...to remnants of evoked despair
as litter scattered here and there
that seemed as though perhaps employed
to camouflage artistic void...

...until I saw her soul released
in layers she together pieced
as pattern random fate could find
befitting space to which confined...

...and I confirmed a poet's heart
was simply drawn to freer art.

**Originally a response to Number 7 by
Anne Ryan submitted to The Ekphrastic
Review under the title "Anne Ryan, Artist
and Poet, as Seen in #7"*

Lorette Luzajic, like Anne Ryan, has taken her poetic heart to freer art.

She has mastered eclectic collage and made it her own. She arranges and layers an extraordinary variety of visual snippets, effects, and expression forms. Simultaneously, she calls instinct, emotion, cognition, recollection, and imagination into the juxtaposed realms that comprise our being. Her works piece together subconscious, semi-conscious, and conscious awareness to position and layer "*cerebral assemblage*".

Lorette uses an incredible range of pigment sources that unabashedly challenges conventional palette wisdom, but the unusual "texture" she achieves by color only begins the presentations she remarkably spawns. They are drawn from a self-driven love of art — reflecting and deeply revering its role in the world's historic, current, and constantly evolving cultural dynamic.

Because she "borrows" much of what she brings together, Lorette describes her fine art, whether simple or intricate, as largely "undrawn." She readily admits that such character is not a matter of innovative design, but a candid concession to never mastering "artistic" drawing. It is in fact a weakness she has turned into an incredible strength. The eclectic array of materials and media she works with have also rightly earned her affectionate reference to "mixed-up media," a term that implies a unique, "next level" intertwining of deconstructed verbal, representative, and abstract expression that compels thoughtful, conscious interpretation as it subtly and subliminally evokes instinctive and emotional reaction.

Indeed, if Lorette's "undrawn, mixed-up media" were a competitive sport, particularly in her signature "square foot" form, it would almost certainly be popularized as "*extreme collage*." Those are her works to which, as a similar minded poet, I am most drawn, and to which she and I have devoted this book.

Her non-traditional square foot fine art, as the name implies, is constrained to a 12 inch by 12 inch canvas that she finishes and mounts to hang, *publicly or privately, without a frame*. Wherever placed, therefore, her dominant colors and patterns create the appearance, from a distance, of striking contemporary decor, but as the eye comes closer and closer, her compelling detail validates extraordinary artistic and thematic excellence.

Purely aesthetic appreciation of her smallish works quickly gives way to perplexing fascination with feeling and meaning that beckons reflection, recollection, introspection, and projection. Beholders are taken away, brought back, and then increasingly drawn deeply into personalizing their sensory and interpretative experience.

Her small, equilateral surface offers no natural horizontal or vertical expectation to exploit. A more conventional artist would usually center a dominant subject or try to defeat the natural claustrophobic effect by very painstakingly managing subject detail and spatial separation to create the illusion of visual depth.

Not content to accept such a seeming dilemma, Lorette is unhindered by the diminished size of her surface. She treats every point on the canvas as the center of a potential focal blossom. That forces the eye to absorb her images entirely, and then either to scan them methodically or to luxuriate in random wandering until every point in them has been registered and every horizontal, vertical, and diagonal focal avenue she has created has been traversed in whatever direction she has aimed it.

She makes that beholding task even more intriguing, however, because each point the eye embraces is also apt to be an intersection of visual elements she has overlaid, one or more of which may be obscuring, diminishing, brightening, accenting, or shadowing another.

The variety of her positioned and layered snippets throughout the canvas therefore generally tends to deflect attention away from the center and to attack depth more as an inward spiralling of provoked feeling and thought in various states of mind.

The impetus for that inward spiralling is typically a very well struck poetic seeming theme, usually a phrase but sometimes only a single word, or a reference, or a number that she asserts as the title. It draws circumspect attention and becomes the test for measuring the strength of her design and its detail. More often than not, therefore, it suggests not what is "pictured" but what is *visually* expressed.

Constructing such thematic propositions is itself indeed an art. It is something not all artists are inclined to do, and something many artists do not nearly as well as they might. Lorette, however, knows those propositions are essential to her task. She constructs and executes them incredibly well. Consistent with her multi-focused and multi-dimensioned images, her themes typically imply a range of circumstance and possibility for the eye and mind to explore and attach to her image. They are one of the several ways she brings her poetic instincts with her. Not simply added to her works, titles become elements of her composition. They are integral, inseparable, and sometimes physically incorporated, in whole or in part.

Those titles are touchstones that she compels beholders to rub not only against her image, but against their own experience and imagination as well. The challenge is not to decipher all that she might have thought in her creative moment, but to recognize visual perspectives she has brought together as expressions and states, and then to personalize their composite meaning. Her artistic gifts make that a fascinating exercise.

The physical, functional, and thematic constraints of Lorette's "square foot" art are particularly intriguing to me. They literally become the "box" that *she* must think inside, and that she must compel the beholder to start thinking inside.

Those imposed constraints are strikingly similar to the limitations that poets, working in small, fixed forms, thrive on.

One must craft expression that is both meaningful and memorable within precisely required length, arrangement, spacing, meter, and patterned rhyme. Those demands create a "box," very similar to the square foot canvas, and similarly compel creative approaches.

While complying with such limits constrains in good measure how one can construct and arrange thoughts, it does not license failure to achieve poetic impact with conciseness, coherence, cohesion, and completeness. On the other hand, it does afford the liberty to use phrasing that might otherwise seem unacceptably awkward, and to use line and stanza separations to soften that awkwardness. Thankfully, those separations can also make longer thoughts far more navigable than they would otherwise seem in ordinary prose.

To make my ekphrastic task as similar to Lorette's square foot art as I could for the selected works in this book, I confined myself primarily to a 14 line form, typically an iambic tetrameter sonnet rhymed entirely in couplets.

Where the art required, I have occasionally varied from that sonnet form in these ways:

- rhyming the first three stanzas alternately, leaving only the last two lines as a couplet
- formatting the fourteen lines in different stanza sets where I think that is particularly useful to readability and poetic effect
- consistently extending each of the fourteen iambic lines by one or more syllables
- using the title to prompt and begin the fourteen line text
- adding lines and in some cases, appending other verse forms.

Although the brevity of such form does not permit me to dwell on the richness of Lorette's visual particulars, it enables me to speak simply, forcefully, and holistically to what her work suggests to a poetic eye looking more at the fullness of expression and suggestion than the richness of image, technique, and detail.

The form does, however, particularly when it stands on its own, similarly demand a succinct, poetically struck theme for all the same reasons. The title is therefore likewise often, but not always, a word or phrase that also appears in the verse text, and as I have noted, on rare occasions, can be used to begin the fourteen-line text.

Used as an ekphrastic complement, however, my tetrameter sonnet often demands less of its title. One can assume, for example, that the reader has seen the work of art first and knows the poem is related to it. Thus, the verse and artwork can share the same title, or the verse can use an obvious reference to the art that might otherwise seem awkwardly cryptic. The verse title still, however, becomes a similar touchstone for the reader, who is then comparing personal experience not only to what has been seen but also to what is being read.

Having spent a great deal of time admiring Lorette's work, I now dwell far more on such particulars of poetic form than I would be naturally inclined. Her work has reminded me that, despite writing poetry and songs (and wishing I could really draw) for a very long time, I have clearly paid far too little attention to the striking similarity that collage, abstract representation, and artistic "styling" bear to poetry. I appreciate those disciplines far more now than I ever have, and that has made trying to do ekphrastic justice to Lorette's work an incredible joy.

When I first encountered Lorette's square foot artwork, I was browsing the Internet for markets and muses. I came upon a very smallish image, and quickly found myself engaged in what became a very lengthy process of looking more and more closely. First, I donned my reading glasses, then used a magnifying glass, and finally awkwardly tried to enlarge the image on the surface of my cell phone. Satisfying success seemed to elude me.

I was reminded of many trips I had made into long established thrift stores, where I used to patiently sift through all sorts of silent, crowded curiosities trying to find something worth "collecting" or that might later serve as creative inspiration. When something caught my eye, it was invariably precariously buried and a very careful, lengthy excavation had to be undertaken.

In this case, when I saw what I wanted to observe more closely, it was a small feature on a crowded page, and it seemed like it was about a dozen feet away on a cluttered back wall bookshelf. From that imagined distance, it looked like a jacketed book that someone had taken down and propped up to see how it looked at much closer range. I could hear myself wondering "Why would anyone do that?".

Intrigued nevertheless, I began that very deliberate process of shuffling closer to get a better look. Yet, even when I could finally confirm that it was indeed remarkably eye-catching, I still wasn't near enough to be sure of everything I was seeing, and that drew me all the closer.

Just as I was beginning to wonder about a title, what I had stumbled upon finally, albeit ever so awkwardly, came into much clearer electronic view, at least in sections. I could begin to somewhat confirm the intricacy and richness of the detail. And I began telling myself exactly why someone might have propped it up like that, hoping someone else would come along and be equally captivated.

I could see, of course, by then that it was neither a cover nor a book, at least not an ordinary book. It was as if every page were transparent, except where things had been roughed in, annotated, sprayed, splattered, stencilled, daubed, brushed, or glued. *All the pages, moreover, were deliberately stuck together.*

Even from my frustratingly awkward electronic vantage point, I could tell there was nothing I could have turned with my fingers. I was literally already staring all the way from the front to the back, and I could tell that sorting out which page was which was clearly going to be a daunting task, especially knowing I was never going to see every page completely. Where they overlapped one another, I was going to have to cope with whatever Lorette might have absently — or far more likely — *carefully* covered up.

Undaunted, or more to the point, perhaps mesmerized, I began trying to work my visual way from page to page, top to bottom, meticulously trying to identify and connect detail, to see contrasts, to outline thoughts. Because I still had not seen the title, that task turned out to be a lot like trying to put a large jigsaw puzzle together without looking at the box, but it didn't stop me. Even when I was convinced that I had reached the last page, however, I still wasn't comfortable with how I got there, so I tried to go backwards and get to the top again.

Somewhere in the middle of all that intrigue, I began telling myself that Lorette also wanted me to believe she had just left stuff *between* the pages, like a scrap of paper or a piece of a postcard. They seemed like bookmarks that just happened to slide to where they had been preserved. Or perhaps things she was just trying to straighten a bit and forgot about.

Yet, even such oh-so-clever logic did not seem to be explaining some other things I discovered. Those looked more like mementoes, somehow related to the pages they fell between, that she was deliberately trying to preserve exactly where they were. I had many times found that to be the case looking through vintage thrift store books, as I was also discovering a fair number of "bookmarks" and somewhat less wrinkled objects.

In any case, that conversation I was having with myself became my "epiphany." I realized that Lorette's little square foot "book" (though I still couldn't see it in anywhere near its actual size), was much more than simply eye-catching wall decor. It could just as easily have been sitting on a coffee table as a ceramic conversation piece. It could have been drawing thoughtful stares in a fine art museum. It was indeed an invitation to think, to converse, to read in a way, but not exactly. And it was not nearly so randomly pieced together as it had seemed at first.

Finally regaining my conscious attention, I knew it was time at last to indeed see if I could find a title. By then, that seemed like the only way I was going to really be confident about what had clearly become a bit longer and more involved journey than I had anticipated. When I did manage to find the title, it was a poetic seeming expression, which I would discover later is almost always the case in her work, and that helped. It still, however, wasn't quite what I, by that time, had hoped I would find.

I was by then longing for a modern-day Global Positioning System, and all she had left was a compass. It brought back some memories, none too fond, of yesteryear orienteering at which I was far less than brilliantly skilled. It did indeed point me in the direction I needed to go, but also made it abundantly clear that I was going to have to do most of the work myself, and to find a way to stay on course. I would later appreciate the wisdom of such a compass far more.

In the meantime, I decided my work-around was to find more pieces that she might have done like the one that had caught my eye. It did not take long to convince me that I was correct.

Each new work I then found and examined also invited me to go through that same get-closer-and-closer process. Some were more simply designed, others more complexly. As I had hoped, however, I began to notice pages somewhat similar appearing in more than one "book". That made me realize finding out more about Lorette would help too, if any such information were accessible. Mercifully, a good deal was, without ever leaving my Internet capable phone.

Slowly but surely, then, my quite-by-chance glance had become bona fide research into the art and the artist, and I became more and more fascinated by the craftsmanship that was engaging me.

I was looking, I could begin to appreciate, at pictures of how the mind actually works. I could see on those separate pages reality sensed, history recollected, emotions formed, dreams recalled, data being read and stored, and fragments begging to be pieced together, many not fully recognizable.

I could see meaning abstracted as color, formed, unformed, and intermingled. I could begin to sense learned templates of attitude, belief, hope, faith, conviction, and love struggling to bring everything together.

I would later read Lorette, in her own words, describing how these works were mostly "unplanned," created spontaneously. Yet I have found them to be well formed expressions, and I therefore believe every element added, whether by logic or creative inspiration, is a product of her experience that has become instinct, that has become imagination, or that has become influence, either subconscious or conscious.

Often, I found myself in the briny depths of an imagined, transparent, foreground ocean where colorful but motionless, inexpressive fish seemed to be metaphorically suggesting there were bigger ones I needed to look for.

Further back on many other pages, I was lifted into a treeless sky where beautiful birds were somehow perched, wings tucked in and beaks closed, waiting to see if I knew how to sing. On still others, I remained aloft but much closer to the ground. I could see butterflies spreading beautiful wings, mimicking the resurrected future they so well embody. And I could see their flight patterns, random looking trails of dust and pollen, still traced, hanging in the air, reassuring me they were quite productive and that my eyes would do well to pay attention to the value of such meandering. And over and over again, I could see the flowers they were attracted to, blossoming with inviting fullness as expectant wombs of their posterity.

Then there were pages where I could see scissored and pasted likenesses of people, their faces concealed by objects nevertheless revealing vocation, self-image, dream, or predicament. And some of them already had angelic looking butterfly wings on...or at least thought they did. I saw the way I really looked at people.

Yet on other pages, I could only see bubbles of effervescing color. Or I saw blobs, or drips, or splatters, or pools, or daubs, or stencilled patterns. Or I saw sharply angled strokes that seemed to float back and forth across the page, or geometric shapes, gently smudged, that seemed to be bobbing on a transparent, windless sea.

Some pages were only numbers, some in sterile, sequential strings of their natural order, some prominently standing alone as permutations of uncertain purpose. Some actually denoted the title of their "book". Some appeared to have no particular significance at all except, perhaps, to remind me that most things I can see have finite and quantifiable dimensions that allow me to put them in perspective. Still, each number I noticed haunted me with the possibility of some encoded meaning that I might, but only if very clever, somehow decipher if I could look and think long enough.

Those ever-present numbers were indeed pushing me to examine everything else I was seeing with the same curiosity and energy.

I guess seeing snippets of digits in their natural sequential order, and then also strewn about as specific permutations, also reminded me that numbers are the foundation of a *universal* language, just as color, line, shape, light, and shadow are. The world measures with them, the world compares with them, the world computes with them, the world reasons with them, and the world imagines with them. And I can too. They are part of our consciousness, once learned, that will never go away.

On still other pages, I could see nothing but characters, sterile seeming strings extracted from the ordered English alphabet. Some characters, however, appeared isolated and oversized, distant and yet connected. Some alphabetic strings were horizontal. Others were vertical, mentally turning my eyes ninety degrees at a time. Still others were upside down or backwards, perhaps Lorette's way of reminding me I was actually looking into a mirror where sooner or later, if I worked at it hard enough, I was going to see myself. They were all, in any case, also reminding me that they too were pieces that we put together as a language, not universal, but certainly well known in the world.

They seemed to be telling me to start building words to describe what I was seeing and sensing that I was conscious and had a job to do.

And yet on other pages, I saw those letters arranged to indeed form or suggest words, words that I could recognize, words that were forcing their way into whatever thoughts were beginning to form. And they were coming at me from various angles too. Some were partially obscured, forcing me to imagine what they were before Lorette so intriguingly interrupted them with a page she had overlaid.

Still others were blurred to the point of intriguing obscurity, and there were even some intentionally dimmed and diminished to the point of being subliminal unless the eye focused very intently from a very short distance or with the optical advantage of some sort of lens.

And yes, on other pages, there were actually discernible phrases, fragments, and sentences adhered or entered by hand that appeared in every way the numbers, letters and words did. I would eventually discover that some of them were indeed the title of their "book" or at least part of it. The others had to be examined as no more than potential clues or simply aesthetic complements.

There were even pages that had snippets of other printed or written paper pages adhered in much the same way.

Some of those snippets weren't even in English. Those almost always seemed to be more decorative than functional, but I was never easily convinced. And I was always reminded of how art transcends the separate languages of unique cultures, becoming a sort of Rosetta Stone from which meaningful translation of situation, emotion, contemplation, and aspiration can begin.

Still other pages embraced functional characters. An artistic looking ampersand frequently glittered as a poetic seeming "et cetera," inviting the eye to expand what it was seeing out onto the wall her canvas was hung on, or to lengthen the narrative it seemed to be unfolding, or to spiral deeper into the thought and emotion being sensed.

Oh, and there were pages with picture in picture effects, cut out photographs of real people, for example, that Lorette seemed to float on a metaphoric sea of their tragic or laughable reality. And there were comic book panels that, with elegant simplicity, spoke volumes to her themes.

Still other pages featured sound effects, words captured in percussive seeming graphic form, like the "BIFF," "BAM," and "POW" that made the fisticuffs of so many cartooned heroes famous. They brought a unique, emphatic, audible dimension to the characters, personalities, and thoughts they animated.

Her "pages," I finally realized, were simply beyond definitive elaboration, and were constantly evolving, as you will discover observing her work. And each "book" she creates is unique, but seems in some way to be connected to all the others, inviting the eyes of her diverse, international audience to see each work as yet another small step in her long, heartfelt, creative journey.

After spending far more time than I realized with fascinating snippets, colours, images, and random seeming lines, I firmly assured myself that Lorette was doing much more than creating decorative, ambiguous seeming images.

She was deliberately and thoughtfully, even if at times whimsically, executing the thematic titles she had conceived, and the effort naturally came across as the poet in her that she cannot restrain. If she didn't invent the title herself, she borrowed it from the Bible, pop culture, newspaper headlines, movies, books, other artists and poets, current events, whatever she had found fascinating in her endless quest for the next muse.

They were mostly phrases, but some were only a reference or a single word or number. Sometimes they were words that could be both noun and verb, or words that when spoken can't be distinguished from the echoes of their homonyms and homophones. Each title, in any case, was a compelling invitation to examine what she had put together very closely.

It is that sort of attentiveness to her purpose that makes Lorette's square foot images, whether collage, abstract, or a hybrid of the two, become very purposeful, I believe, both by conscious effort and subconscious influence. She certainly deliberately infuses the seemingly irrelevant where it creates good visual effect or intrigue, but even those things seem to effectively complement the evocative or contemplative effects she is trying to put behind her title. She is literally thinking inside that 12 by 12 "box" as every page is carefully layered, no matter how random seeming.

And again, that doesn't guarantee that a beholder will see all that she felt or thought at the time, but it does tend to assure her that the beholder, looking closely at her work and its title, will be thinking too.

Lorette does not limit her presentation to the vast array of "mixed-up media" that stick to a flat surface (though she keeps all such options at the ready). She also overlays emotions, ideas, events, dreams, concepts, philosophies, cultures — the gamut of our existence.

When you look at what she has created, you are seeing how your mind really works. We actually function by looking at one thing, recalling another, and imagining yet another. We actually see the transparent masquerade of self-image, for example, that she makes so literally visible. We actually recollect in snippets.

We actually recall the sprinkled and disguised realities that have appeared in our dreams. We actually deconstruct and reconstruct the very way she pictures it for us. We actually project ourselves on to objects and into other people.

In short, Lorette immerses you in the fact that *you were born to realize — to conceptualize intent and to materialize effect*. She reminds you that you are able to compartmentalize, and yet also to homogenize, to fantasize, and yet to analyse and optimize. And perhaps most importantly, even as she forces you to recognize disparity and discontinuity, she implicitly encourages you to appreciate the value of socializing, of harmonizing, of seeing yourself in others, of allowing others to see themselves in you, of recognizing that existence, if not shared, amounts to nothing.

That is how she makes you see the holiness in humanness — and see the humanness in holiness.

That is how she makes you understand that life is a series of conversations. Faith must reckon with fear, instinct with soul, strength with weakness, and love with indifference. Those are dialogs that do not search for midpoints, but for ever-changing fulcrums that optimize balance and leverage in the moment at hand.

That is why her "portraiture," in whatever eclectic form it takes, speaks so very powerfully to very real traits, predicaments, emotions, and consequences. In fact, one of her many artistic endeavours involves creating on demand, commissioned work in which she builds uniquely individualized, "biopic" collages of real people and real enterprises. She calls it "All About You." Those works are remarkable testaments to her insight, her abilities, and her media.

Her self-initiated portraiture, on the other hand, is naturally often drawn to others like herself whose legacies, whether already entrusted or still in the making, are journals of ardent and arduous artistic, philosophic, and experiential treks. Many of them are tragic, and she invites you to learn from them. It is not enough, she reminds you, to conjure your dream, or even to live it. You have to beware its risk and consequence. You have to manage its sorrow and joy with a love that confines it, and you must ultimately be willing to reinvent it when that becomes necessary.

She is thus constantly impressing upon you that while you will always be the yesterdays you have been given, the past has to be where you learn and leave, not where you live and love. Your consciousness and its imagination have to be working on the tomorrow that you believe in — the one that you are preparing for today.

If you are a fellow artist, she is telling you, therefore, to remember that art is not a retreat into silence but an attack with weapons of mass induction. It becomes the spirit of the moment, the mirror of our being, the lesson of our history, the vestige of our culture. You are born, she reminds you, to memorialize the moment, not to romanticize it. You are meant to stop it, and to create the perspective from which it can best be seen, so beholders can observe it over and over again. You have them do that not so much to gather what you sense in it or what you might think about it, but to engage those beholders in the creative process of defining it for themselves.

And that explains what she strives to make her own art — and her own writing — do.

It explains why she has gone beyond the "square foot" horizon to larger thematic canvases.

It explains why she is also a gifted verbal artist, a remarkable poet who speaks very plainly to candid observations with vividly sensed imagery, compelling sensitivity, and constructive insight.

It explains why her workshops — enabling people to discover and strengthen the joys of "undrawn" art and creative writing — are such precious gifts to those who participate.

It explains why she is the founder and editor of *The Ekphrastic Review* — a rolling, fee-free, online-only gallery for submitted ekphrastic verse and prose appearing with the art from which it was drawn.

It explains why she enlists her will and work in charitable causes.

And all that, taken together, explains why she is a successful, self-driven entrepreneur. She is a champion of stubborn independence and of unfettered self-expression worthy of becoming healing, growth, art, and ekphrastic literature.

She lives her creative philosophy.

And that made me envision the compilation of our shared art, verse, and commentary as the conversation that this book could become.

Lorette and I originally talked about constructing a much simpler, two-part, art-facing-poetry "dialogue" between us. First, her square foot art would react to my traditional poetry, and then, in reverse, my poetry would react to her square foot art.

I had, for some time, been inspired by her remarkable journal, *The Ekphrastic Review*, to develop a set of short, traditional poems that would form a primer for appreciating the history, the here and now, and the future of visual art and ekphrastic writing. I had likewise become immersed in creating — from a fixed form poet's perspective — a significant number of ekphrastic responses to her fascinating signature square foot art. We essentially envisioned creating a sort of illustrated textbook on visual art and ekphrasis that would also celebrate her creative journey and the incredible institution that *The Ekphrastic Review* journal continues to become.

The more we worked at going forward, however, the clearer it became that the original concept would not get us where we had talked about going. We would have plenty of her art to work with based on the ekphrastic responses I was developing, but we were going to be remiss if we failed to let her incredible poetic voice be heard as well as seen. Having her “converse” with this “preface” in her “foreword, and then with ”my “primer” verbally rather than visually seemed to make far more sense.

Her strong, lucid, staccato style of poetic prose, influenced ingeniously by formal training in journalism and the creative imagination her art requires, would very effectively demonstrate not only the power of art begetting art, but also the strength of the passion that is making her evolving, multi-faceted artistry so timeless and her entrepreneurship so successful.

Thus, we realized there would be distinct three threads to our "conversation" — the complementing preface and foreword, my primer with her responses, and finally, her art with my ekphrastic reactions. And we would end with her last piece of art, the one that one from which she created our front cover, responding to my verse from which our title was drawn.

The curious juxtaposition of our traditional and post-modernist talents would thereby be complete and cohesive. It would illustrate ekphrasis by example on multiple levels, and the book itself would very much mimic the remarkable collage that becomes her extraordinary poetry and her art. It would, moreover, very strongly suggest the nature and effect of her incredible journal, *The Ekphrastic Review*.

In so doing, we believe this effort effectively complements the masterful collaborations that Lorette has previously done with Bill Waters and with Devon Balwit. Both are incredibly unique and highly creative poets who are well recognized in their own right. Our work here is therefore simply "volume three" of a series we hope will be continued long into the future, and it joins many smaller efforts to pay ekphrastic homage to Lorette's individual works. We want this to be a resource and celebration that will serve her continuing journey well.

We trust you will agree.

My ekphrastic poetry here is not written to stand on its own. I have consciously tried to complement Lorette's works — and to compliment them.

I simply hope my efforts will turn your deserved attention to hers. As I say with every submission to her journal:

*Ekphrastic joy comes not from praise
for words but from returning gaze
far more aware of fortune art
becomes to eyes that fathom heart.*

In her signature art, Lorette crystalizes a professional journey that is touching many lives with the precious gift of enduring interest in art appreciation and creative expression.

Her commitment is blazing a remarkable trail.

Signature Square

How well your square's perfected shape
becomes the sheer and gathered drape
of window colors inundate
insisting sense and soul relate

to things beheld as juxtaposed
above a labyrinth undisclosed
perhaps already burrowed out
or left to augered faith and doubt

or to imagined bridges found
as passageways through common ground
that prove one cannot isolate
what greater powers integrate

to be forever puzzle solved
by life ordained as love resolved.

Portly Bard

Foreword

I confess that it feels awkward to find my artwork and poetry under such careful scrutiny, however glowing. I'm moved to know that random seekers might stumble on my art, and be guided through curiosity and enchantment into the spaces of my imagination. To have a contrasting talent like the Portly Bard give so many pages of analysis, insight, and his own creative expression, fueled by mine, gives me a whole different perspective on my own work. It shows me what someone else sees when they look.

Even so, being looked at so closely gives me something akin to stage fright. My art operates on a visceral level. I see my process, and the final products, as a kind of archeology. I take in found images and phrases, snippets of cinema and literature, tidbits of the daily detritus of my own life and the worlds around me, and jumble them together until they reach an aesthetic that satisfies me. They don't have a preconceived meaning, but are meant to wander through like cities or dreams. When a poet somehow finds the words I didn't have to reflect my own heart back to me, it's a beautiful but unnerving experience.

It was not initially intentional at the outset of my evolution as an artist, but my work is filled with symbols, and over time as it becomes a large body, personal motifs, cultural icons, letters, numbers, words, and recurring imagery have formed a lexicon of sorts. Some occur routinely in almost all of my artworks, and others show up as regular guests. Some appear fleetingly, never to be seen again. I always want the audience to respond to the symbolism in their own way, unravelling the layers that resonate with their own experience and emotional responses and meanings. But of course the personal connections are central keys to their creation in the first place. Certain images and references turn up over and over- some of these include fish, forget-me-not flowers, numbers and letters, x's and o's, Johnny Cash, birds, crosswords, rabbits, Biblical references, hands, scissors, and Marilyn Monroe. To read in someone's poetry how those disparate symbols are read by someone else adds rich new layers to my open-ended excavations of the human heart.

In 2015, when I started *The Ekphrastic Review*, I was interested in literature inspired by art because I loved the challenge of articulating the feelings that were hard to describe, the unseen stories in a painting. The idea that many pens would excavate a multitude of different stories, some personal, some imaginary, some informative about the art or artist, was wonderful to me. A picture was worth ten thousand words, or more, even as it was already complete with no words at all.

The fact that I was equally drawn to writing and to visual art was how I landed at that particular intersection. I wanted to provide a space where other writers who loved art could share and compare impressions and challenge themselves to find a way into difficult pieces or unearth forgotten narratives. My studies of art history showed me that for the vast

majority of human image making, the intersection of picture/words was already present. Whether art was ritualistic/religious, about mythology, or about history, it was showing us something from a story. Simple representation of a bowl of fruit or landscape in front of the painter was just as ripe with allegory and multilayered meaning. Even if a vase of flowers was just a vase of flowers, it still revealed something of the time, place, culture, and personality. I loved watching poetry bloom back out of the pictures, in so many different ways, from deeply personal to pragmatically informative.

Writers who discovered ekphrastic writing would never run out of words, because images constantly generate ever expanding meaning and creativity. It was like a magic trick, to me, to watch how a painting could ignite more and more worlds and words from simple contemplation. I felt like writing from art led us into a more profound understanding of art, humanity, history, and ourselves, if we gave it the space to do so. I was thrilled that the humble journal brought writers who had discovered this trick together, and even happier to share my favourite paintings with writers who had not seen them. To have this joyful, rich experience turned toward my own paintings is strange and magical, like a room with a million mirrors.

To have Portly Bard approach me with a bouquet of ekphrastic poems from my collage paintings was especially surprising because he writes in traditional metred, rhyming verse. My artworks are postpostpost postmodern, a grab bag of appropriations, informal, unstructured. I have a particular love for contrast and unexpected juxtaposition, and Portly Bard's thoughtful contemplation in such measured poetry of my chaotic Luzajic-in-Wonderland creations is a marvel and a surprise. He has keenly observed inside these works very mechanisms and spirits behind my art. These are things I have had great difficulty putting into words or explaining myself.

I am honoured to have this attention paid to my artwork from an artist as astute and insightful and musical as Portly Bard. His uncanny poetic proclamations have unpuzzled every gesture and snippet from the simplest, crudest scrawl of graffiti to the most inside of jokes I thought were securely hiding in my own mind even in plain sight! The purpose of art is of course, to be seen, and each and every audience member who looks has his own take that becomes a part of the original. My originals, of course, are deconstructions of my own psychology interpreting experiences and the art, literature, and culture around me, scrambling up what I process endlessly in new combinations. Portly Bard is a wizard who makes them stay still for a moment so you can really see inside. For me, it is both an unsettling experience and a beautiful feeling of completion. I often say that the importance of ekphrastic writing is that it lets us look more deeply at art. Portly Bard has given me that gift even with my own.

Lorette C. Luzajic

Our Thoughts on Visual Art and Ekphrastic Writing

To help you understand both of us a bit better before you begin to look at our selected works, Lorette has added her intriguing perspective to each of the following verses in which Portly illuminates the professional universe that has spawned her art, her writing, her promotion of ekphrasis, her curation as the founder and editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*, and her multi-dimensioned enterprise.

These are thoughts each of us have carried for a very long time, but they have found their way together in the form you see here because of our very recent acquaintance.

I Am a Visual Artist

My art is time that stops as seen
by which thereafter eye can glean
from image or from object made,
while in the conscious mind replayed,

a transient, soft, reflected sense
of what it is and represents
remolded as perspective gained
might leave it less or more explained

and alter view for eye and mind
of foreground and what lies behind
in colours that so orchestrate
what shape and shadow illustrate

in image and impression bound
as fascination newly found.

1. When the inevitable question comes my way- *how do I become an artist?*- my answer is always the same. *Don't*. Make stuff, create worlds, imagine, love, and live. But forget about "becoming an artist." Find something else. Have children.

2. I think it's good advice, to be honest. The ones who can't help it won't listen, and the ones who can will have a chance.

3. Winter is so beautiful it will claw out your eyes. You will be blinded by the light.

Lorette

I Am Visual Art

Despite by artist being deemed
a likeness fit to be esteemed
of what so well I now enshrine
by capture in discrete design...

...I know that as expressed intent
to share what — as conceived — I meant
I'm still no more, as message sent,
than I'm believed to represent.

I thus by time no longer bound
am freely shared wherever found
as bread upon the water cast
of moment though forever past...

...returned to grow a thousand-fold
in those enchanted who behold.

1. Brush strokes. The puff of paint that glows behind the haystacks.
2. Light falling. Sunset sifting rust and sapphires.
3. Swirling dervish stars. So many moons.
4. Ink-blot columns of jumbled larkspur. The skinny skull of a naked rabbit.
5. Women, in pearls, disintegrating while reading a letter.
6. Red stripes, floating in thick meringue.
7. Smoke stacks, and a fire on the river. Heaps of ice, floes under midnight.

Lorette

I Am a Beholder of Visual Art

My task *each time* that I behold
is letting what I sense unfold
from objects viewed as fully framed
with title (if indeed they're named)

as they become impression found
that beckons me to fertile ground
in which far deeper thought will grow
from where I've been and what I know

that blooms as context and surmise
to complement my searching eyes
that turn in far more ardent gaze
to role that subtle detail plays

where purpose and technique converge
to make complete design emerge.

1. I was fourteen, and the redhead messed me up. The Marchesa di Casati, Augustus John's Luisa. She was a jolt of adrenaline, a cosmic socket. I was fourteen when I fell for her, hook, line, and sinker. I was not alone- at least a million would swear she'd resuscitated them from waking death. She was interesting and commanding and aloof. We followed her crackling skinny stockinged high jinks along moats and boulevards, one of her entourage of monkeys and white peacocks. Her haughty, gaunt indignation glowered from those flaming tresses into the holy halls of Toronto's gallery. She is there today, smoldering still.

2. How I wanted to say I'd seen something, been something, entered the hallowed halls of MOMA in New York while still a child. I hoarded images already. I soaked in them. They were like a blood transfusion. They ignited in books and shoeboxes around me, generously curated- I wanted everything. I wanted to ravish Cezanne's apples, sleuth the corridors behind Di Chirico's light and shadow architecture, press out Arp and Miro like Jello mold salads or sugar cookies.

3. And so I went. Met Hopper and Hoffman and Wyeth.

4. And Modigliani.

5. I wore many hats to school, when I bothered going at all. There was a raven-wing wig, straight and blue black. There was the Michael Jackson pleather jacket I'd scored at a thrift store. There was Jehovah's witness, all patent pump and pantyhose and dowdy Laura Ingalls skirts that I imagined to be more like Scarlett's petticoats. But the gallery girl was the most convincing persona. The hungriest.

5. I was so earnest. I still have that MOMA catalogue. The pieces I'd seen were dutifully check-marked for reference.

6. Later, I crawled up and down the hills of Barcelona for Gaudi's mosaics, excavated for ceremonial gold in El Dorado, watched a caricaturist sketch my man in Havana. Peered into Cornell's assemblage boxes for hours in Chicago. Touched a Basquiat in Pittsburgh, for one flicker fast second, hoping I wouldn't set off any alarms. I had to. Needed to feel that pulse. Later that same weekend, I sat in the cemetery grass beside Andrew Warhola. Made it a picnic, lit into a cheese and tomato sandwich.

7. All those paintings full of poetry. I felt the divinity of every creator.

8. Art changes you. Behold, you are a new creature.

Lorette

I Am Ekphrasis

The soul that lies within its art
I waken to the beating heart
of life by which it's heard and seen
through me as kindred go-between...

...from point of view and frame of mind
by which I find that I'm inclined
to speak to all that time renews
as sight that you should never lose...

...of people, places, and of things
amid the random change that brings
your search for purpose to implore
that beauty be, forevermore,

the joy of truth far better found
together seeking common ground.

1. I couldn't catch up to you. I tried. There were a million unsettling words. I barely knew them. I held them between my teeth, cradled their crest, felt their crush against my empty breasts. Still couldn't catch them.

2. Inside art, oxygen, minerals, desire. I try to pin want with words. Falter, fall prone against the sheltering sky.

3. I know nothing about you. You know everything about me.

4. Sketch every painting the way Jack sketched Rose, salvaged her soul before sinking.

Lorette

I Am [Title]

Although I hope that you behold
in me the ekphrasis foretold
by turn of brief poetic phrase
commanding understanding gaze,

if nothing else at least I speak
to work of art by name unique
— a means mundane, perhaps oblique,
or comic as if tongue-in-cheek —

by which you will assemble lore
that gives it life forevermore
through ekphrasis, its echoed voice,
in which the artist will rejoice

as value that such work is worth
so long as it endures on earth.

Post Scriptum:

*If I'm unknown or unassigned,
I leave, as nameless, art maligned
thus dispossessed
to seek and wrest
such joy as fate might have it find*

*embracing grace of loving name
from each beholder granting fame.*

Titles are an important part of my art, whether I am writing poetry or stories, or telling stories in art. I will fall back on a simple and utilitarian title, but for the most part, the title is part of the collage. Ideally, a title will have a slight hint of wit or be clever in some way, pack an emotional punch, honestly reflect the work in question, create an unexpected image, and have a mystery inside of it. Often, my titles are allusions to other works of art—just as I cut out snippets of text or imagery and glue them inside my paintings, so are the titles sometimes snatched from the world around me.

You can get stuck on a title, waiting in vain for inspiration in order to finish a piece. Finally, you throw in the towel and call it by something second-best: perhaps you describe what you see, or manage a vaguely poetic title that is sufficiently satisfying if not your finest. The show, after all, must go on. But how wonderful it is when the title is where you start, and inspiration flows freely around it. Most of my artworks, even my poems, begin with a small seed, which might be a colour combination, a found image, a word I like, or an emotion. Sometimes that seed is a title, a combination of words I stumble upon or spill out of my imagination. The art is born into being from the suggestive power of the words.

Lorette

I Am Poetry

I am the song expressing thought
to be recalled in manner wrought
by cadence that befits the aim
of point or passion I exclaim

with images in sounds I've brushed
to scream or seem as softly hushed
while reason winds methodic way
through rhythmic and melodic sway

engraving on attentive mind
impression I would have it find
as echo that forever cast
affirms as both returned and past

the moment that was seen and heard
as message painted word by word.

1. Words, sheer, shimmering.

2. Flickering fireflies at the side of the highway.

3. Night falls fast, craters fill with sand. You will be home before the clock strikes midnight. You will prove elusive, bow to defeat, wreak wild havoc, spring up and dance like asparagus stalks swaying, baying to moons, slippery as language.

Lorette

I Am an Ekphrastic Poet

I craft my works each word by word
in form that I would have be heard
as rhythmic and melodic sound
that hauntingly to meaning bound

becomes a voice that emanates
from stillness it emancipates...
no longer mere imagined worth
of artist who has given birth

to what, preserved in time and space,
becomes immortal soul and face
of gifted eye and hand and heart
transformed from being into art...

...but also blossom of its seed
that grew in me who gave it heed.

Feeling Ekphrastic



I didn't know what this meant, not really, until I started *The Ekphrastic Review*.

When I was young and hip, we used to have these little alternative writing circle sessions, a few friends who were serious about writing. We would see what the muse breathed through us while sitting in a circle and playing different songs that each participant chose in turn.

It was something we might do before going out to the pub. We clutched our notebooks eagerly. We must have instinctively understood the value in what we jotted down and promptly forgot. Sometimes, I would pull out a painting to match up with the song in a random way, give it a twist or a back story that might infuse our poem.

We didn't think of these processes in lofty words like "ekphrastic." But we were on to something.

Lorette

I Am Artful Prose

Give me, as art, my rightful place
(though I might lack poetic grace)
when — as ekphrastic tale I've told
entwining message to behold —

coherently I illustrate
the point that I accentuate
with incident or anecdote
to be recalled, though not by rote,

as brief vignette, perhaps memoir,
becoming door I leave ajar
to soothing if not healing balm
of sermonette becoming psalm

in closet of perspectives gained
as ointments for the unexplained.

“Way out in the country tonight he could smell the pumpkins ripening toward the knife and the triangle eye and the singeing candle.”

Ray Bradbury, *Dandelion Wine*

I’m particularly fond of a quote attributed to Charles Baudelaire. “Always be a poet, even in prose.” There are few joys like language, and nothing leaves me colder than dry, flat, lifeless writing. Sometimes people ask me what I look for, as editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*, in poetry or fiction submissions. I often say that I want to read stories that are *interesting*. It is just as important for a writer to engage fully with the pleasures and treasures of language. Artful prose is essential to the best reading experiences. If story or information alone is all that is required, we would read the newspaper or an instruction leaflet instead of looking to writers and artists for their interpretation of the human experience.

One of my first loves in literature was Ray Bradbury. I was never drawn to science fiction, fantasy, or dystopian literature much beyond his (with exceptions for Dick or Kafka or Orwell on occasion.) Bradbury’s robots and machines and planets were far less compelling to me than the way his language tumbled and spilled over the page, giant bursting drops of life that were like magic spells and prophecies. Bradbury’s style was an interesting blend- he was verbose and flowery and poetic, revelling in wordiness, but his stories were all short and even his novels were more like novellas. The poetry of his prose was utter magic- all those grim carnivals and strange worlds ignited into vivid image as if real. Such is the power of language- image, imagine, magic. These words don’t connect in etymology as tidily as they seem to, but that too is the thrill of language, which requires both archeology and suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader to be fully realized. We love clues and juxtaposition, we crave both logic/reason and symbolism/mythmaking. The best of prose, the best of art, brings both to us, together, through sheer poetry.

Lorette

I Am Flash Fiction

As start, and middle, and as end,
though brief, cohesive words I wend,
as lure and lair entrapping prey
to hear the message I convey

as cause to see or recollect
or meet anew and then reflect
on wonder of the reason sensed
for telling you my tale condensed

that jolts with humor by intent
or far more somber traction meant
to have my point within disclosed
indelibly as truth exposed

with no recourse but to react
to flash the mind cannot retract.

The smallest stories are a joy to read and write. They are like choice chocolate truffles, dense, delicious, fleeting.

Lorette

I Am a Gallery

The passions held for art and word
need me to be where seen and heard
the two become the genesis
of image and of ekphrasis

that those beholding can critique
who choose to like, ignore, and speak
unfolding as they do the sense
of being heard as recompense

for labor that as love pursued
becomes, by such intent imbued,
the satisfaction deep within
that dulls the ordinary din

of days that otherwise would seem
dismissive of immortal dream.

1. The walls are closing in around me.

2. Tiny cups of wine like communion. Cheese and crackers. A clipboard with prices you can't imagine are real. Nothing is real. Everything here is conjured.

Lorette

I Am Your Inner Artist

I within you somewhere lie
composing with your mind and eye
the world you sense, the work you do
as beauty you uniquely view

and passion you articulate
as hope and dream to resonate
from vision you within possess
as heart and soul that coalesce

in being you are meant to be
employed by future you can see
as instrument for purpose made
of guaranteeing love conveyed

both to yourself and others who
become the faith that you renew.

If my role is anything outside my own artwork, it is this.

I want to be the angel and the demon on your shoulder, saying, “Look closer. See that?”

I want to show you everything.

Lorette

I Am Art Put to Use

I fear, no more, futility
of never found utility.
Transformed as pixels dark and lit
of image captured bit by bit,

though elsewhere I in truth reside
my likeness now can be applied
wherever by creative mind
with clever purpose I'm entwined

as face of culture I preserve
in usefulness I newly serve
beheld by far more many eyes
than might have seen me otherwise

were I still but exhibit viewed
or hidden in collector's brood.

I have put my paintings into the backyard bonfire. Also, into laundromats, or as gifts for friends and followers. I believe in their value, but also in the fact that making room or sharing love will birth new ones. I also feel that what happens to my art after it is acquired by you is your business. I don't believe in dictating the ways that you can have it or see it. You decide.

Once I got a message on Facebook from a stranger, with a snapshot of one of my paintings. He said he loved it and was wondering what it was worth and what the story was. He had Googled my name from the reverse of the canvas. I asked him where he got it. It was one of my favourite pieces. The man was reluctant to say, but finally confessed that he saw it sticking out of a dumpster while walking his dogs. He was so afraid I would be offended, and many artists might be. But what went through my mind was, if someone had money to spend 800\$ on original art and throw it away a few years later, that's their business. I had sold the piece five years before. I told the man that those folks had no idea they were buying an expensive gift for him. Enjoy!

Some artists will also get offended if a customer wants to match their work to an interior decorating palette. I wonder what they're thinking. Not everyone is planning to write poetry or think about divine beauty. Some want to live in a space with the aesthetic harmony of an art and sofa match. So?

Some will find another way in, or another way around. That's their call too. I hope my poetry and my paintings could sometimes show something of my soul, or mirror theirs back to me somehow. It does work out that way, like that, just like this, this book that we are looking at. I'm just as surprised as anyone.

Lorette

I Am an Art Teacher

My love of art I leave as gift
to hands and hearts I hope I lift
to confidence becoming skill
and boldness of creative will

that dares to color, cut, and paste
what they have found or drawn or traced
and merged to be an object made
first proudly signed and then displayed

as evidence of who they are
that into time could reach so far
and be when yet again unearthed
what seems the moment dream was birthed

of all the soul had come to be
that art had given means to see.

1. Sister Wendy was overheard talking in a gallery on a rare day pass to leave her cloisters and visit a museum. In a mad twist of fate, the monastic nun, who lived in almost total solitude, became perhaps the most influential teacher of any time in bringing art appreciation education to the masses.
2. My reach is much shorter, but I feel it's meaningful enough. I show art to anyone I can.
3. I want to show anyone who's curious what the possibilities are, what kind of stories have changed me along the way. I want to discover new gifts of creativity along with those I'm traveling with, whether through life, or to the next stop on the Metro.
4. I was always writing, but long before I knew I would make art seriously, I was a voracious independent student of art. I went to galleries, museums, and looked at books and thought a lot about various art movements. Surely my art teacher in high school helped excite me to those various narratives. Art history remains even more important to me than making art to look at art. When I write, I want to bring some of this alive for somebody else.

Lorette

I Am a Creative Writing Teacher

I teach the mind to find its voice
to mirror fate, and faith, and choice
as messages to be believed
in words that are with care conceived

perhaps as tale that they invent,
or moment they recall as spent,
or something seen they come upon,
preserved as sensed before it's gone

that speaks to truths in subtle ways
that others understand and praise
as skill refined until an art
that stills the soul and moves the heart

becoming echo evermore
of whisper heard as if a roar.

A List of Favourite Fiction Teachers. Not Exhaustive. In No Particular Order.

The Bean Trees, by Barbara Kingsolver
House of the Spirits, by Isabel Allende
Outer Dark, by Cormac McCarthy
The Pilgrim's Progress, by Paul Bunyan
Hotel Iris, by Yoko Ogawa
My Name is Red, by Orhan Pamuk
Ann of Green Gables, by Lucy Maud Montgomery
The Shipping News, Annie Proulx
Bridge to Terabithia, by Katherine Paterson
The Blind Assassin, by Margaret Atwood
Angels and Insects, by A.S. Byatt
Olivia Kitteridge, by Elizabeth Strout
Gentlehands, by M.E. Kerr
Gone With the Wind, by Margaret Mitchell
The Diviners, by Margaret Laurence
The Secret History, by Donna Tartt
A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius, by Dave Eggers (not quite fiction)
The Wind Up Bird Chronicle, by Haruki Murakami
The Danish Girl, by David Ebershoff
Harriet the Spy, by Louise Fitzhugh
Something Wicked This Way Comes, by Ray Bradbury
The Scold's Bridle, by Minette Walters
The Loss Detector, by Meg Pokrass
The Girl With the Pearl Earring, by Tracy Rose Chevalier
Feast of All Saints, by Anne Rice
The Witch of Blackbird Pond, by Elizabeth George Speare
Jacob Have I Loved, by Katherine Paterson
The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald
The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, by Alexander McCall Smith
The Westing Game, by Ellen Raskin
To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee
Alice in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll
Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley
Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, by Jonathan Safran Foer
The Dark Half, by Stephen King

Lorette

I Am an Art Historian

No tale is there more precious told
than through the art that we behold
of artists who have been our eyes,
our means to sense and realize.

I serve as scholar who revives
their dreams, their works, their storied lives
as legacy that time will leave
to journey richer I believe

for record I will help create
of how they ably illustrate
that fear and faith we've juxtaposed
— by instinct we would leave enclosed —

are better understood expressed
as dialogue of thought confessed.

Art matters, because it is everything.

It is a time machine. It is buried secrets. It is a diary. It is culture, faith, history, trauma, witness, war, love, exploration, philosophy, creation, journalism, poetry, self-expression, mythology, theory, nature, murder, heritage, ancestry, sociology, psychology, fantasy, medicine, invention, narrative, diversity, anthropology, and mystery.

When you ask a writer why they are hooked on ekphrasis, we often speak of the benefit art brings to our writing practice. There is no writer's block- you will never run out of prompts. You can put your pen in someone else's shoes with ease and explore the world from that perspective.

Perhaps what we are doing is so instinctive that we seldom mention it, but the essential key to ekphrastic writing is, of course, the art. There are millions of valid things for writers to write about- business, politics, cats, babies, recipes, celebrities, vintage fashion, family, naked women, urban planning, and mining stocks. Why do we choose art?

Art is everything, and writing is thinking. An ekphrastic practice is, in my opinion, the most direct way to art appreciation and art history. We give ourselves permission to study, reflect, research, and sort out in words some aspect of an artwork. There are lots of ways to learn about art, whether reading academic text books or taking a night class or watching a documentary. Ekphrastic writing often includes all of the above, but it is in and of itself the most direct and experiential way in. Those who practice ekphrasis regularly develop a keen understanding of art history's chronology and scope. We permit ourselves "favourites" to taste, allowing preferences to draw us deeper, which makes it personal, too.

Although ekphrasis is powerful and gives us confidence to speak about art history and our own relationship to art, it is also humbling. We learn fast from our unorthodox approach to study that ours is not the only viewpoint or response, that art's reach is even beyond the intention of the artist.

Lorette

I Am an Art Patron

I sponsor art by selfless gift
to archives where beholders sift
through work that should it go unseen
would take from us the right to glean

the wisdom only time can teach
of height and depth the soul can reach...
...I likewise offer stipends paid
in hope that by expense defrayed

those teaching and creating art
are free to be impassioned heart
and hand that will prolong the days
remaining song as endless praise

of all that we have dared embrace
and kept ourselves prepared to face.

I didn't know it at first, but I knew it later. So I would tell it to everyone who ever said, "Oh, I'm not an artist. I'm just a collector." I would say, "You know, what you do is the most important thing," because it was true. Money and politics and drama aside, this is the essential truth. The one who shares with many, and maybe even pays many, is vital. There are millions of artists, and they are endlessly fascinating. But patronage and collecting is more necessary and much more rare. It is often nameless and thankless and expensive, even if it is done to show off a keen insight, a grand passion, or big money. It is madness, too—who would spend more on a sculpture than they would on a car or a surgery? Who in their right mind would forgo the economy of a print if an original might cost a hefty portion of one's salary or budget? Yet collecting art is not frivolous. It keeps enchantment, history, and diversity of interpretation alive.

Lorette

I Am an Art Critic

I am the conscience trained to speak
to quality of art's mystique...
...to grade degree of talent shown
compared to masters better known...

...and trace the genealogy
of process and technology
providing proof that validates
its influential borrowed traits...

...or makes, if present, proven case
for innovation taking place...
...all findings which might lead to fame
if I have made well-reasoned claim...

...perhaps affecting market worth
or place in annals of our earth.

Post Scriptum:

*I add for sake of clarity
your right to see disparity
between the value I assign
and that to which you might incline.*

I despise the word “critic”- a self-appointed arbiter of art. Yet I also despise the laissez-faire anything-goes attitude of entitlement among some artists. Not everything is art, this we know, but even so, the definition of what is, is maddeningly elusive.

I’m frustrated today that people who call themselves artists know shockingly little of art history, the most important element of their namesake. Of course you cannot possibly grasp most or even a fraction of what there is to know, but I do expect artists to know a *little* about their passion and their craft. Once I mentioned Monet at a young man’s opening, and he said “Who?” True story.

On the other hand, I expect much more of anyone who calls themselves a critic, and even then, your name had better be Robert Hughes or someone channelling Christopher Hitchens. It is better to simply be a person with an informed opinion, or an interesting interpretation, and not be a critic. I’ve often told onlookers of my oeuvre- and that of others- that they were welcome to their likes and dislikes. Permission to view and assess for oneself is the best way to get people thinking about art. Just opening the door to art is sometimes worth more than closing it.

Lorette

I Am an Art Dealer

I am the needed go-between
assuring art for sale is seen
and sold as briefly merchandise
that it must be as enterprise

assuring artist vital means
and still more time that muse convenes
as moments in which things observed
are sensed and reasoned, then preserved

to resurrect when eyes are cast
so long as care can make it last
the soul of gifted eye and hand
that so well still you understand

because of future long foretold
begun as object bought and sold.

I am not an art dealer, unless you count hawking my own work and wishing I was better at sales! But if I was an art dealer, I would want one of those stuffy and overstuffed little store fronts or store tops, overflowing with quirky curiosities, walls jammed ceiling to floor with eclectic naïve paintings on cardboard and old door frames, folk art and soulful portraits of blues singers who busk down by the river. If I ever fancied myself the type of art dealer who is well-heeled and high-heeled, with epic minimalist accessories and tailored Vuitton pencil skirts, cool and ruthless, brilliant and extroverted, it was a bad dream and it didn't last.

Lorette

I Am an Art Collector

I purchase art I choose to own
as object by which to be known
perhaps for beauty or mystique
that to my taste or wealth would speak...

...or for investment I perceive
as profit I'll in time receive...
...or for enduring gift to send
unique as message I extend.

Though I become thus income source,
enabling art to run its course,
I'm seen as blessing and as curse
to artists better, others worse...

when art collected I pursue
is thus removed from public view.

1. I have a mental list of what I would collect if I was a patron or collector. And I still might, should I ever become wealthy or even just stable.

2. I don't have my sights set on high roller thrills- as much as I love Vincent and Vermeer, outbidding China or a museum is a fantasy. I would much rather have a collection that represents what I find interesting. I would take oddities by forgotten surrealists, some messy gestural rites of creation by Antoni Tapies, and the operatic folkloric scenes by the eccentric fellow Canadian, legendary figure skater and underrated painter Toller Cranston. I'm happy with an autographed copy of the book he illustrated, *The Nutcracker*, a treasure in my library.

3. I would have an Erte sculpture and an Arp. Photography by Walker Evans and Lola Alvarez Bravo. I would probably specialize in Mexican art. And self-taught artists.

4. The first thing I would buy if I came into real money would most likely be something from Joseph Cornell. Everything he assembled was a poem. When art feels most like a poem, it is the kind I love most of all.

Lorette

I Am Art's Future

I wonder where, as art, I'll go
amid the future ebb and flow
of innovation prompting age
where neither canvas nor a page

will need exist except as stored
in terabytes to be explored
no longer fixed by ink or oil
of pen and brush that nobly toil

or metals forged or chiseled stone
enduring like our frame of bone
that time would tend to leave intact
as evidence and artifact

of soul that touched its earthen face
and left forever pictured trace.

I resist digital and yet I don't. I refuse to cross over into "digital collage." But I wouldn't think of organizing poetry and sending it off without word robots, files and folders and easily altered turns of phrase.

Machines have always given us pause to think about the boundary between the real and the not real. It's a philosophical concern that we confront at every stage of evolution, pondering where we've been and where we're going and what it means. I believe deep inside that it is anti-human to perceive technology as artifice, or dismiss anything synthetic. Man-made IS natural, after all, and though there is no rival for the sea and the stars, we too, are the Master Artist's handiwork. What we have been infused to discover and create is divine.

This sense is compounded in me because I admit I have always been more attracted to concrete and paintings than to lakeside mosquito pits, however idyllic. My art is largely about this attraction. I'm a city mouse and don't share the popular disdain for urban conveniences and modern triumphs. I'm as mesmerized by the moon and her mysteries like anyone else with blood in their veins. But I've always loved photography of urban decay and mechanical rust and spare computer parts. They mark something to me that is both practical and apocryphal, these beautiful, beautiful machines.

Lorette

Selected Works of Lorette C. Luzajic

On the pages that follow, you will see a signature square foot work by Lorette on the left and Portly's ekphrastic reaction on the right. This "gallery" begins with a work in which Lorette has reduced her visual artistry to its elegantly simple essence. She creates, though not intending to, a startling self-portrait in Portly's view. These works end by reversing our conversation. The last image is Lorette's visual response on the right to what Portly believes Thinking Inside the Box is all about on the left.

The Chrysanthemum Queen



Self Portrait Seen in Floral Queen

No image have I ever seen
more faithfully as mirror glean
the essence of creative soul
so by its art becoming whole

as in the lilt of floral queen
whose realm is her imagined scene
where colors effervesce as breath
of life, though still, immune from death

and borders of reality
confront originality
within which she can juxtapose
emotions as if embryos

to cast as seed to wind that nigh
so makes it seem that she can fly.

One Apple Up on Top



You're the Apple of My Eyes

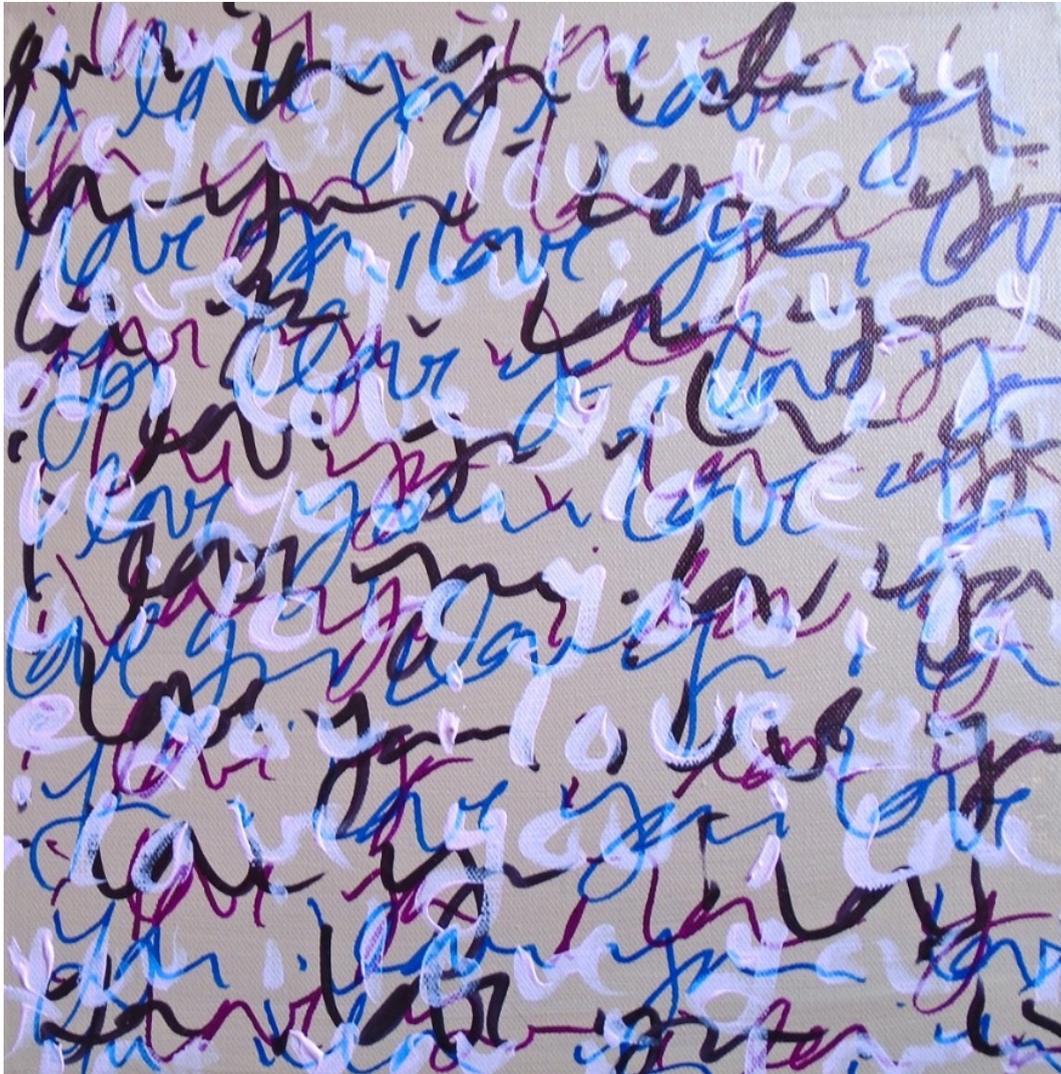
Does here and there observing pink
cause little girls to stop and think
as angels that what they must do,
though daughters, is be mommies too?

How precious worn upon their clothes
are hugs and kisses we impose
they see as gifts that they receive
of love entrusted they believe...

...that they in turn must also share
with every doll and teddy bear
that they embrace — not merely hold —
to offer wisdom they unfold

in role so often they'll reprise
with "You're the apple of my eyes."

I Love You



Threads of Truth

It's not how many times we say
"I love you," rather it's the way
no two are ever quite the same
though moments that we choose to name

when silence would as well declare
that eyes entwined are there to share
profession of our faith so real
it seems much more than how we feel

admitting we're but half a soul
until embrace that makes us whole
affirms by softly echoed voice
connection in which we rejoice

becoming beauty life can weave
from threads of truth that we believe.

Where the River Goes



Fear of Where the River Goes

I'm but a fish in river where
I break the surface, feel the air,
and fall despondent in despair
to wish for wings that I could wear

and be instead the butterfly
who flutters through an endless sky
and never has to wonder why
its life between two banks would lie

where all that it has never seen
denies a way to ever glean
the wisdom that would still a soul
that has no way to seize control

nor hope at hand it might impose
on fear of where the river goes.

Do Not Enter



Should One Retreat...

The "Do Not Enter" sign forewarns
the roseless thicket full of thorns
that time becomes should one retreat,
as if it were a two-way street,

to keep reliving yet again
what never was but might have been —
the love that one so bravely dared
though knew of course was never shared

and yet imagined might exist
as seed unborn should one persist
that one could nurture into bloom
as common ground became its womb

and tears became the gentle rain
of spring returned that one would feign.

Grammar Lessons 1



A Wrought Thought

A sentence is a thought complete
where predicate and subject meet
(achieving as they do the task
declare, command, suppose, or ask)

in person, mood, and tense, and voice
that make each verb a proper choice
while antecedents all agree
(in case and person they should be)

with pronoun forms that lessen space
required for words that they replace,
and punctuation well denotes
possessive case, and any quotes,

and shortened forms, and pauses made,
and when to rest the thought is laid.

Grammar Lessons 2



Paragraph (Indented Impression)

A paragraph denotes a point
a single thought cannot amount
sufficiently to get it through
the explanation it is due,

which causes authors to beget
thoughts bound as an indented set
to start, to stop — and in between —
have two or three from which to glean

enough detail to clarify
the who, what, when, how, where, and why
of notion that its start purports
and end reminds one that it courts

by path coherent and well laid
becoming its impression made.

Grammar Lessons 3



Essay (From Premise Laid to Promise Wrought)

An essay clarifies a point
a paragraph cannot anoint
with detail that would get it through
the sum of what it must accrue,

which means that authors must beget
five paragraphs or so as set
to give their matters proper due,
comprising by the time they're through,

a bridge from start to finish which
the journey over should enrich
by pillars of befitting strength
supporting its suspended length,

from premise laid to promise wrought,
the path of its connected thought.

Orange Fish, Blue Fish



Life That Cannot Hear Its Soul

One fish of orange, one of blue,
saw yet another neither knew
about to pass between the two
with none heard asking "Who are you?"

but all by orange lady seen
as if transparent submarine
had lowered her to vantage where
imagined glass would let her stare

at life that cannot hear its soul
or share the need to make it whole
by learning what it could not know
except by love allowed to grow

from dialogue by which we're blessed
with hearts consoled and sins confessed.

I Believe I Can Fly



I Can Fly

I found myself an ugly bug,
akin it seemed to slimy slug,
for all I did was crawl and eat
amid my pauses to excrete

until with self-indulgent swoon
I closed myself in my cocoon
not knowing by self-centered feast
that beauty would emerge from beast

until at last I felt I'd grown
by slumber spent so long alone
ignoring in protective space
complaints about my lack of grace

and yearning so to sail the sky
with wings now proving I can fly.

Travelling Light



Travelled Light

Left most of what I thought I knew
behind and bid my fond adieu
to youth where I so long had been
but knew I would not be again —

convinced my brightly colored dream
had been condensed to lasered beam
illuminating path ahead
that persevering I would tread

until, by journey I pursued,
envisioned joy had been accrued
not knowing what would bar my way
and distance I would go astray

before in truth, by heaven's Grace,
my soul returned to run its race.

Night



Urban Night

To distant eyes, the urban night
becomes abstractly patterned light —
the flickered evanescent gleam
of both the nightmare and the dream

as slow but sure, half-life decay
illuminates the disarray
of life enraged and life enriched,
each fear and joy together stitched,

in shapeless sprawl that quilts its way
reforming what was yesterday
as newly moving bloom and blight
amid the blur of teeming flight

from place to place that fate has mapped
for those who to such realm adapt.

Nightmare on Wall Street



Traders

They fear both blinding black success
and sudden bloodied red distress
for well they know each moment's all
about unstable rise and fall

in value of what has no worth
intrinsic to support the birth
of price agreed by circumstance
to represent no more than chance

believed by those who've bought and sold
that future they assume foretold
will in the longer term sustain
advantage sown to harvest gain

from puzzle — still unsolved — remade
by risk of yet another trade.

Immaculate Sigh of Stars



***Bridging Crane and Luzajic**

By piers and cables, bridges stand
above the rivers they have spanned
at night perfecting metaphor
by lights that reach from shore to shore

as if aligning heaven's sky
from soft hello to sad goodbye
reminding us that our success
begins with purpose we possess

as do the twinkled blues and whites
that inundate our restless nights
with waters of imagined seas
awash in possibilities

awaiting plans to engineer
the ways to get to there from here.

**Hart Crane immortalized the
phrase "...immaculate sigh of stars"
in his poem "To Brooklyn Bridge," a
moving tribute to a remarkable
architectural feat in its day.*

Cafe De La Gare



Art at Heart

Few other works could better show
the Paris artists come to know
where flutter seeming aimless flight
through colors of its day and night

creates a living appetite
for still but shaped and shadowed light
as savor of its fine cuisine
and beauty busy and serene

becoming art as something worn
or canvas to new life reborn
as mirror of so much we sense
delighting us as recompense

for silence by which we confess
we could not half so well express.

The Yellow Dress



Simple Black and Yellow Dress

The shortest way from A to B
the butterfly will never see
whose yellow wings betrimmed in black
will take a far more random tack

to bask in all that it can sense
by journey that without pretense
will seek the strangely missing green
of meadow instinct has foreseen

with palette richer to pursue
of blooms beneath a sky of blue
where mere alighting will adorn
— with wings that seem as if they're worn —

a rose, perhaps, with warm caress
of simple black and yellow dress.

Voices Carry



Of Silence, Too, Be Wary

Some things we try to lose we find
remain as shadows close behind...
...like secrets darkly locked away
still spectres feared in light of day

as dreams to which it seems we wake
that follow every step we make
believed to others indistinct
yet to ourselves forever linked

as burden borne and unrelieved
despite deceit that we have weaved
by clever seeming false pretense
that time begets no consequence

for silence in which we've presumed
the truth can lie as if entombed.

Epilogue:

*Love indeed should speak well wary.
Voices, even whispered, carry.
Silence, though, by likewise token,
only leaves the truth unspoken.*

Once Upon a Time



Once Upon a Time...

A shapeless multi-colored mist
that thinly veils where we exist
becomes for children curtain drawn
on day of truth about to dawn

in fabled land of far away
that so upon their minds will play
as simple lesson wisely learned
becoming joy its author earned

by work begun as pencilled jot
of notion that became the plot
for story taking shape as draft
and polished by persistent craft

until a tale of truth sublime
beginning "Once upon a time."

Chocolate



French Chocolate

French chocolate is the timeless face
of risk that beckons our embrace
by shape bedraped as fashioned art
so chic above mystique of heart

with pull of its pervasive scent
predestining, it seems, intent
to feast at first with longing eyes
on beauty seen that verifies

the need to whet by tender feel
the appetite becoming real
for all that we believe within
we so will want to taste again

as nibbled joy of endless night
in which the soul would so delight.

Plegaria de Santa Muerte

We pray for souls of those now dead
who've given life to us instead —
the moths who dared to face the flame
as did those who before them came

to meet our danger unafraid
with never thought of tribute paid
for heroism made routine
so much of which would go unseen

until the moment sacrifice
became the everlasting price
that would not ever be repaid
for part that they so bravely played

if not for those unrecognized
by whom their roles have been reprised.

These Outrageous Thoughts



Confession Seeming As If Made That These Outrageous Thoughts Portrayed

Obscuring thoughts I dare not speak
for fear that secret I might leak
becomes an image to regret
that I could never more forget,

I leave this misty, hanging haze
as smoke of smolder not of blaze
that though I know is false pretense
concealing all my soul can sense

I let as wisdom here prevail
yet stand as work I hope will pale
beside the many more I've made
where truth complex has been portrayed

while here instead I prove by hue
that silence is expression too.

When I Am An Old Woman, I Shall Wear Purple



The Rainbow's Lesson

Though aging seems so far away
I see the course that I will stay
while grace of love with which I've grown
still serves me though I'm on my own.

So many storms I know will pass
whose fading rains like prism glass
will glisten with the red and blue
of love, and yes, of longing too

and yellow's age and envy's green
yet darkened purple nowhere seen
for that's the color I must craft,
long after I have wept and laughed,

to wear as sign of wisdom gained
that reappearing suns explained.

Unlimited



Avenues Indeed Exposed

The sun descends in many ways
to be the light of better days
ahead for eyes by which it's seen
illuminating ways to glean —

as once but now no longer true
or changing even as we view —
the trails that butterflies have traced
to leave their eggs diversely placed

beneath unfinished sky in hues
of fading and emboldened blues
that speak to limits not imposed
and avenues indeed exposed

affirming license to create
and earth as gift to cultivate.

Time Will Tell



Journey Blessed

By dawn and dusk that it resumes,
time speaks to both the seed and blooms
about the dark that they abide
not out of fear from which they hide

but out of need to be at rest
renewing strength for journey blessed
with storms that gather, flood, and fade
as seas returning life remade

by water now no longer brine
distilled that sky and sun refine
to run its course as ebb and flow
of life arisen long ago

from depths that would no longer bind
the joy that it could seek and find.

In My Hour of Darkness, She Is Standing Right in Front of Me



She Will Hear Us Should We Speak

As vessel of the Hope alive
through which the human soul can thrive
and angel thus forever near,
we need not ask her "Are you here?"

For she will hear us as we speak
and reassure us Grace we seek
is given in the faith we own
as courage summoned she has shown

to paint the darkness more as dawn
in pale pastels of fear withdrawn
to shadow cast behind the bloom
of peace that will before us loom

as we acknowledge warm embrace
of Light to which she turns our face.

Why



Another Why Not Answered Yet

So much of life is what she makes
of deaths abrupt from which she wakes
— the yesterdays forever gone
that, giving way to breaking dawn,

each bid the child in her adieu
to greet as truth returned anew
the forces raging unconfined
compelling change of mood and mind

expanding remnants unresolved
of puzzle never being solved,
each answer seeming to beget
another why not answered yet

and dream that beckons faith to cope
with dusk that would bedim her hope.

Poker Face



Yet Another Distant Dance

Her dance is never quite embrace.
Emotion seldom has a place,
and when it does may well mislead
by case that she would falsely plead

concealing what she might desire
as smolder of a dampened fire
to which no wind could find its way
— through ashes of her yesterday —

to embers that if still aglow
awaited more she'd have to know
before allowing kindled flame
to reignite the risk of game

where wager seems no more than chance
of yet another distant dance.

The First Day of Light



Origin

The Light became the universe,
the palette strewn as perfect art,
that He would frame and yet disperse
as all together though apart

within which earth by sun and moon
would know its passing night and day
where life thereafter coming soon
would rise and rest in vast array

and only man could sense the soul
to which all being would return
and paint it as abstracted whole
imagination could discern

as Light from which we were begot
that faith could prove though fact could not.

I Find Myself in Objects



Silence Blurred

She sees her soul as God's garage
where clutter is the entourage
of curious, eclectic mind
collecting hope that it can find

an image pieced together blessed
as moment made to be possessed
by others who will pause to peer
and listen for a voice to hear

that whispers secrets she's withheld
explaining their intrigue compelled
by things portrayed she's juxtaposed
in which she finds her soul exposed

that seem no more than silence blurred
by thoughts that cannot be inferred.

I Miss Feeling Close to God



Soft Pastels

Sometimes I long to be the child
who still unhurt and undefiled
was wrapped in wonder and in awe
of soft pastels as all I saw

in which I felt love's true embrace
as gift of unconditioned Grace
parental joy so well conveys
in gentle push and constant praise

and reprimand from which I learned
that one receives what one has earned
not yet aware that what that meant
would one day be the discontent

of feeling I was all alone
with pain that I could not disown.

What Matters Most



Love Becoming Faith Regrown

What matters most is seed we've sown
by love becoming faith regrown
as destiny to be fulfilled
that given once must now be willed

as life by which the soul remains
the heart of being it sustains
in generations multiplied
now growing and diversified

assuring its resistant course
as power of creative force
that oversees the earth's domain
to which it has been given rein

obliged forever to its care
as vital water, soil, and air.

Ready or Not Here I Come



The Gift of Tears

At panic's valley, penchant's peak...
...what you would hide her art will seek
as mirror in which you reveal
what she has found and knows you feel...

...confusion as the frame of fear
surrounding what within is clear...
...the azure of an endless sky
where clouds are merely passing by

and songs of love are softly heard
as sun unseen by light inferred
that whitens billows even more
of lifting shrouds becoming door

through which you'll pass as you accept
the gift of tears that she has wept.

Hashtag Island



Thus Unleashing Online Mobs

Before efficient online search
we saw from our omniscient perch
the need for self-made indices
becoming programmatic keys

assuring query we could bind
would have the means by which to find
precisely what it sought to get
with speed that needed to be met...

...and then by brilliance unrestrained
we saw that by such keys maintained
that we not only could retrieve
but shape what others would conceive

while flocking to our islands built
from phrases we could form and tilt.

There Are People Who Live on Dreams, She Said, And I Am One of Them



Persistent Dreams

Naively, some would say it seems,
do others try to live on dreams
in fragile castles made of sand
on shores of oceans close at hand

that foolishly can but await
the rush by which they dissipate
becoming lost forevermore
and never knowing opened door.

Yet just behind them towers rise
(to shade their disbelieving eyes)
solidified by sunken beams
beneath the sand where fleeting dreams

had fashioned with persistent gaze
the feeling there were better ways.

Hashtags Pink and Yellow



On Hashtags...

Pink or yellowed, fresh or stale
as leading edge and wagging tail
they index social media
as if encyclopedia

of all we need to know and feel
by labels that affirm appeal
to swollen anonymity
collaged as if an entity

proclaiming proof by "sampled" bent
of global interest or intent
that is, in truth, ungoverned hoax
becoming news the vocal coax

from threat by postured consequence
of such illusive, heated vents.

Everything You Need Is Right in Front of You



Not Until...

If all you need you stand before,
unlock and push the mirrored door...
...but not until you've looked behind
at all the love that you will find

that's gotten you to where you are
so proud that you have come so far
from awkward steps so often seen
as courage on which you would lean...

...and not until to left and right
you have the friendships in your sight
that you will take within your soul
as parts by which you now are whole...

...and not until you look ahead
at God by whom you're being led.

Inquiry



If...

If I'm in love...how would I know?
What proves that I...should think it's so?
And if it does...what should I do?
And how would I...know you are too?

And if you are...what happens then?
Are we still as...we've always been?
If not, then what...have we become?
Are we two parts...or somehow sum?

And if a whole...would that then mean
that we upon...each other lean?
And if so might...we somehow fall?
And if so would...we lose it all?

And if so would...we once again
still be as we...before had been?

Tempest in a Teapot



Footloose, Free, and Twenty-three

A storm is brewing you can see.
She's footloose, free, and twenty-three.
The steam will soon by whistled tune
foretell the damage to be strewn

as herbs and spices ooze and seep
to flavor leaves she's left to steep
— in turbulence that she's withheld
no longer needing to be quelled —

and sate the air with swirling scent
intoxicating by descent
her soul inflamed with sweet surmise
of passion welling in her eyes

that will not want for men to see
if they might be her cup of tea.

How Can I Begin Anything With All of Yesterday in Me



Mourning Now Becoming Dawn

Today returns to fallowed field
the yesterdays of hallowed yield
as sun becomes unwanted light
that cast upon my restless night

awakens but reality
of what so seemed finality
yet in my soul will long endure
as images of faith's allure —

the hope that I must keep alive
as lesson by which love will thrive
in soil more fertile left behind
to work with heart and hand and mind

in mourning now becoming dawn
of day I bear and carry on.

Tears of the Moon



***Irish Trilogy: Part II**

His songs unheard were, from the soul,
the truth confessed, beyond control,
of night he knew was incomplete
but shadowed softly his retreat

to crescent moon of discontent
by day he would not dare lament
where he pretended seen was meant
and heart unbroken was not bent

beyond the yearn to be as friend
a joy that time would not transcend
nor make as more than child's embrace
of comfort in familiar face...

...until he felt his songs returned
as love he thought was undiscerned.

**Also based on Tears of the Moon, a novel
by Nora Roberts*

The Dream is the Aquarium of the Night



Dreams

My night an endless ocean seems
by silent ebb of tidal dreams
receding from an idle shore
as echoed dull of cyclic roar

that leaves the jetsam widely strewn
by force of unrelenting moon
exposed in eerie orange light
as clear though darkly shadowed sight

of things I threw as life's debris
to depths I thought I'd never see
returned in brine's eroding guise
that vaguely I can recognize

and pray are but imagined trace
that rushing waves of dawn erase.

The History of Radio



Mass Communication That Became Our Fascination

It was not coincidental.
Innovations incremental,
notwithstanding all the static
that might make it problematic,

gave us sound that air could carry
with no lines to raise or bury
and the mass communication
that became our fascination

with our history in the making
at the moment it was breaking...
and with music veneration
that defined each generation...

...and political imputing...
...and the traffic of commuting...

...and the gurus of prediction
spouting weather fact and fiction...
...and the instant information
that became self-education...

...and our riveted enchainment
to imagined entertainment...
...and the sermons awe inspiring
of the faith that seemed untiring...

...and the voices so enthralling
that made games that they were calling
seem like hearing could be seeing
with the feeling in our being

we were sitting there beside them
with the right to praise or chide them...

...never thinking of Marconi...
...ears to Zenith then to Sony.

Arrangement in Blue and White



Silence

So striking is abstract bouquet
of blues and whites in such display...

...as day recalling dark of night
suspending dreams in endless flight
through all that loomed so far away
from youth that was just yesterday...

...and now as heaven drawing near
colliding with increasing fear
that time too soon by sudden wane
might leave undone what would remain
unfinished then forevermore
in shadow of still opened door...

...to sun unseen in timeless room
where blue and white no longer bloom.

The Place Where the Images Are Born



An Image Born

An image born is moment dead
preserved as though it goes ahead
as everlasting afterglow
recast so others too will know

it should be savored yet again
as if their now were still its then
or their tomorrow might still be
the dream it left therein to see

or lesson there to be discerned
before more harshly being learned...
...or feeling time must never numb
as sense of all that we become

by moment left to others who
are then the life that we renew.

Shortcut to Happiness



The Quickest Way to Happiness Is...

...a sovereign border being crossed
to seize what otherwise is lost...

...from north to south a respite brief
of never-never land's relief —
fiesta and siesta bound
as peace unlikely elsewhere found —
for which fair price is duly paid
and which cannot be overstayed...

...from south to north a path immune
for crimes availed as opportune
including theft too few will see
of sovereign opportunity

in shadowed trade of contraband
that sadly finds untold demand.

The Butterfly Effect



The Butterfly Effect

Who knew a storm might be foreseen
in distant flutter so serene
of multi-colored butterflies
that made their way to shallow skies...

...arising from the leaf and bloom
they left as soon expectant womb
of generations yet to be
the face of our eternity...

...not knowing force by which they're stirred
would also elsewhere soon be heard
in clouds begetting precious rains
to nurse the waiting hills and plains

that mutely speak as rock and earth
to what becomes of such rebirth.

The Catastrophe of Personality



Personality is...

...one's character — totality —
of consciousness, morality,
and instinct to which cause is traced
for thought and action seen embraced...

...and therefore what the self believes
and yet what someone else perceives...
with neither seeming quite the same
when called upon to be the blame

for traits becoming target of
resulting castigation, love,
or marketing that zeroes in,
precisely by the point of pin,

on matches it can make so well...
of those who buy...to what will sell.

A Word to the Wise



Not If But When

Beware of burden you invite
misjudging size of what you bite
believing you can somehow chew
on what is clearly choking you.

The question is not if but when
you'll wonder what it might have been
— amid perfected health and pace —
that made your heart begin to race

and blood to flow with pressure grown
to hidden heights and loom unknown
as source of the abrupt demise
that some will say was no surprise

and more will mourn as moment they...
...saw coming but did not convey.

Marilyn of the Pale Roses



Beyond the Pale

Recasting her in mold of fame
they stripped her of her former name
enticing her to sacrifice
her dignity as fortune's price

for Norma Jean beneath her skin
reimaged as their Marilyn
who, based on their salacious pose,
became bouquet of single rose

that, kept in fishbowl as if vase
exposed to every eye malaise
to which a rootless stem succumbs
in water it forlornly plumbs

of prison that beyond the pale
leaves faith to falter, then to fail.

Writer



Writer

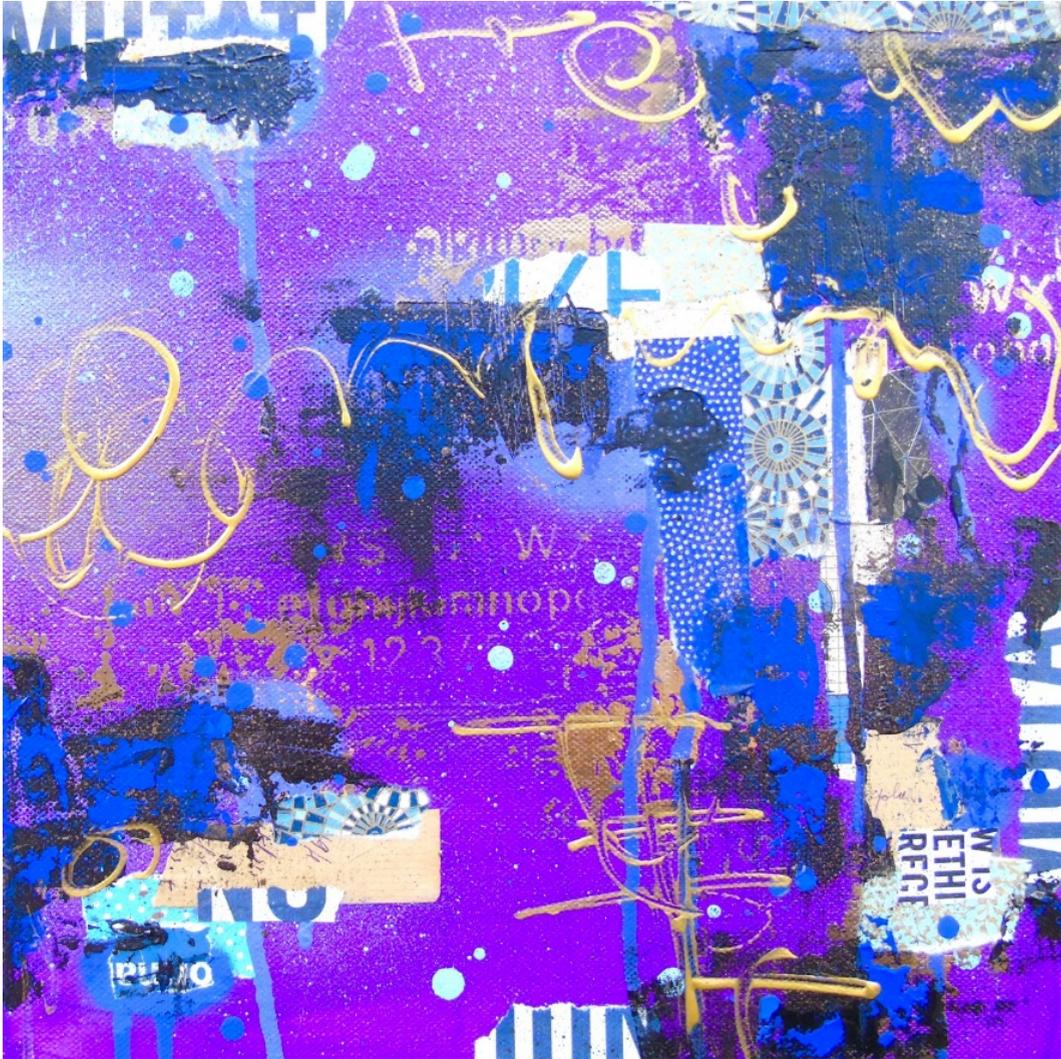
Her craft is art she paints by word
for eye and mind to feel when heard
as moment and emotion bound
to message left and later found

as living proof impression made
can be unseen and yet conveyed
across the sharply carved divide
that time unyielding leaves so wide

and still be felt as warm embrace
and whisper as if face to face
that falls upon attentive ear
as voice to even then endear

the reader to the silence spent
in reaping fruit of such intent.

A Secret Garden



What-if Flowers

This place is where what-ifs will grow
as mutant seed of all we know
that in our minds we dare conceive
as what we think we might believe

in fertile fill of Petri dish
that nourishes, though but a wish,
a germ from which ideas spring
so long as they to life can cling

by somehow seeming viable
as chance not yet deniable
that at, perhaps, the very least,
they might well live to be the yeast

as if by magic giving rise
to seed in someone else's eyes.

Midnight Angel



***The Kleypas Plot**

How clever to have feigned your death
before the gallows claimed your breath
for waking with your hand to hilt
of weapon yet uncertain guilt

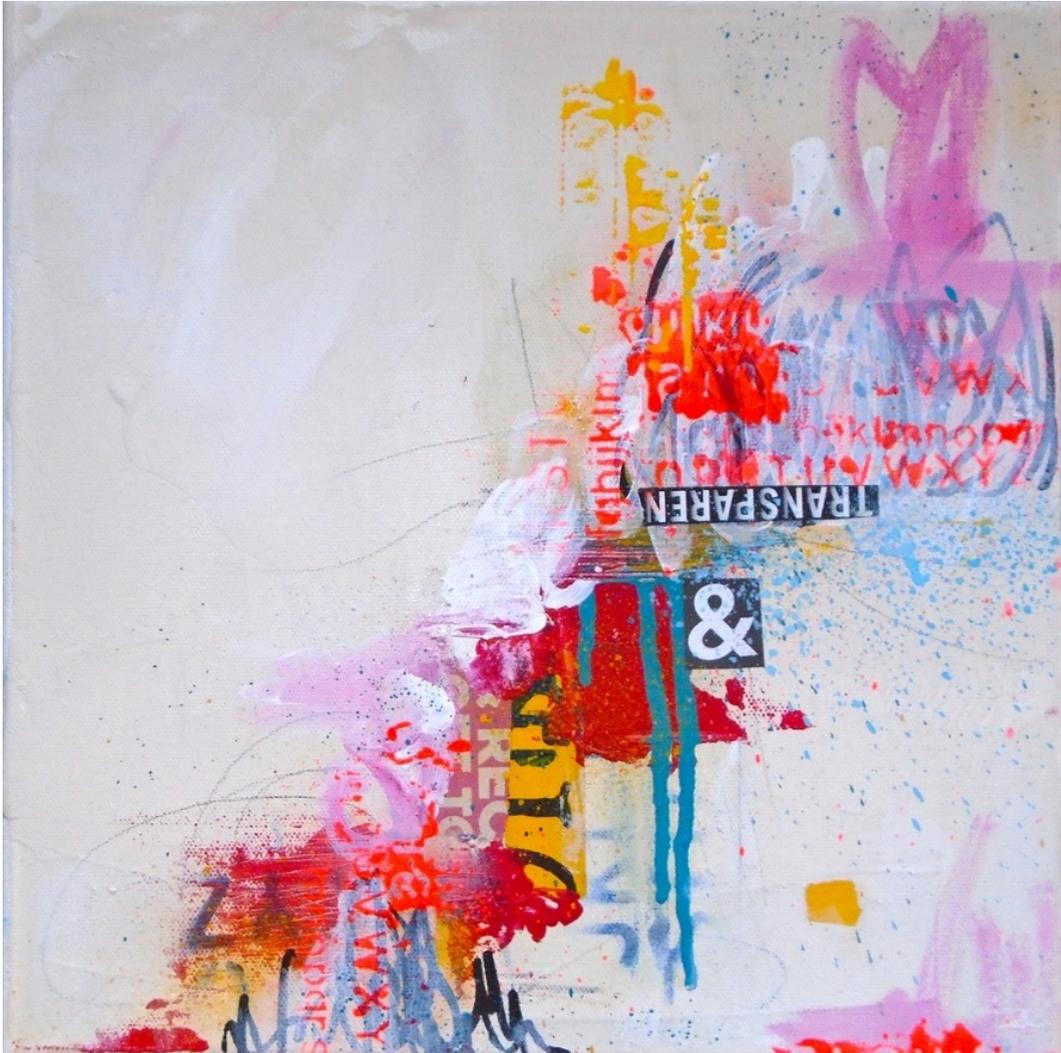
amid the unrecalled demise
of your betrothed as stark surprise
from which you've fled by your deceit,
still bearing fear, to life discreet

as governess for youthful child
of widowed noble you've beguiled
whose joy will see your secret kept
through vengeance he will not accept

as passion turns to midnight oil
his love will burn with fervent toil.

**Also based on the novel Midnight Angel,
by Lisa Kleypas.*

Transparency



I Am My Dream

Transparently, I am my dream
— far more than I at first would seem —
pastel and neon, pale and bold,
becoming stories I unfold

as colors leap to silent life
becoming frozen moments rife
with elements I juxtapose
and drape as if each other's clothes

some left as remnants, others whole,
to mimic an evolving soul
ascending as unyielding love
to all that it can rise above

made clearly worthy by its flight
so gently bent toward the Light.

Roses Are Red, Violets Are Blue



The Colors of Love

With crimson red we best imbue
our love as passion we pursue
that hungers for its like embrace
and mirror of coequal face

so heart and soul and eyes entwined
can be the one by two defined
as joy of such communion sown
that neither could have known alone

beneath the skies of azure blue
that violets perfect as hue
of heaven's path to peace serene
by glimpse of purpled shadow seen

as promise of eternal rest
in love to which we so attest.

You May Be Surprised to Know



Spirit Free

Although my spirit wanders free,
I cling to my integrity.
I'm neither callous, cold, nor coarse.
I fail, I fear, I feel remorse,

but do not squander self-respect
on carelessness or on neglect
of values by which I control
the worth within that is my soul

and yet I grant to others room
to be what they for now assume
is proof of promise praised as hope
providing means by which to cope

with having heart they seldom show
surprising those who come to know.

Around the Bend



Time's River

Time's river never sees its end.
Our passage is from bend to bend
that we by faith and daring wend,
regarded more as friend to friend

with love as rudder and as oar
of strength and weakness we explore
in calm, in current, and in roar
of peril that we come before

from moment born until we greet
the bend that but our soul will meet
as we become the work complete
we've left as those whom we entreat,

induce, enable, and inspire
to be rekindling of our fire.

Sugar, Sugar



Sweet Delight

Oh sugar, sugar, so refined,
the fashion by which you're defined
conceals and yet reveals the charm
by which so blithely you disarm

with honeyed look and sweetened scent
conveying, though unsaid, intent
of siren call to rocky straits
where peril's promise seen awaits

yet even more becomes allure
of danger men will still endure
for moment in which they're compared
to others who have failed but dared

to find in shadowed pink and white
— and twist of orange — sweet delight.

Constellation in August



Each August...

Each August stars will seem the same...
...still paint the pictures I can name...
...still be direction I can sense...
...still measure distance so immense

between the world I used to know
and future into which I go
still seeming somewhat unprepared

for steps that are no longer shared

except by common, longing gaze
— through darkness overwhelming days —
at twinkling of eternity
that long ago we learned to see

as dream we did not have to chase
predestined by forgiving Grace.

Elegy for Vickie Lynn Hogan



Who More to Mourn?

Did Anna live somewhere within
the beating heart of Vickie Lynn?
Did Vickie know beneath her skin
the Anna seeming distant kin?

And which of them was more morose
and measured time by pending dose?
And who had been the Frankenstein
dividing life as "yours" and "mine"

to feed a fervent appetite
to be Monroe returned to light
reliving taunt and taint of dream
as soul that she would merely seem

becoming heavy burden borne
of lives between which she was torn?

Dreaming in Colour



Why Don't We Dream in Black and White?

Why don't we dream in black and white,
absorbed and omnipresent light,
that really ought to fill our night
with shades of gray to our delight

so clarifying what we see
as something that could never be
the way our movies used to do
and television we would view

to find escape in dulled relief,
suspending willing disbelief,
and basking in a book alive
reminding us that we survive

by leaving lots of what we feel
in worlds we know cannot be real?

All the Sweet Memories...

So unexpected they arise
from wistful, brimming, weary eyes
to flutter over gnawing fear
and nourish joy forever near

of buds that newly bloom again
recalled as all they might have been
if fates had been far more aligned
for hearts that seemed so intertwined

in timelessness remembered where
forever felt like it was there
and yet somehow would slip away
as but another sweetened day

to labyrinthine honeycomb
such moments lost will make their home.

The Beat Goes On



The Beat Goes On...

Contemporary we define
as future under redesign...
...as all that's been that we can see...
...reforged as we would have it be.

We are the fashion being worn,
the cut and cloth in us reborn.
We are the language spoken now,
the questions why, and when, and how.

We are the new incessant drum
of heart now serving soul to come
unyielding as we venerate
the music that we generate.

We are the future here to spawn...
...the living proof...the beat goes on.

Where To



If Aimless...

If aimless, I surrender hope.
My journeys are my means to cope.
They're not about a place to reach,
but what the time I spend will teach

so long as in direction known
I blaze my way obliged to own
all I have done and failed to do
(explaining where I've gotten to)

respecting the community
that granted opportunity
to carve the marks I leave behind
as course of faith for those to find

who seek what they will better see
as path of possibility.

When You're Going Through Hell, Keep Going



Keep Going

A leader speaks as if the soul
to hearts that fear would else cajole
into retreat that has no end
and leaves no sovereign fence to mend

where tyranny has overrun
the liberty that once undone
will hence forever be repressed
where land long owned is dispossessed

and broken will becomes despair
that faith no longer seems to bear
so haunted by the echoes heard
of despots to whom they've deferred

and those who stayed the course and fell...
...for those who stopped to rest in Hell.

This Way to Freedom



This Way to Freedom

"This way to freedom" reads the sign
that points beyond imagined line
as if to some locality
escaping the reality

that all proclaiming they are free
means none of them indeed would be
for we are only truly free
where bound to what we all agree

is rule of love becoming law
that circumscribes the lines we draw
defining sacred liberty
to which we're bound and oversee

admitting we are only free
to own accountability.

Thinking About the Meaning of Life



Two Intersections Each a Place

Two points in time, two points in space,
two intersections each a place.
One known, the other unforeseen,
life the moments in between

of soul embodied taking flight
amid rotation dark and light
embracing all that it can learn
to chase what it begins to yearn

in dream that leaps ahead in time
to satisfaction found sublime
of knowing things foreseen are done...
...that course of faith has had its run...

...and peace pervades what time remains
as just reward that trust explains.

You Were Always On My Mind



Waters Always On Her Mind

She had the night in which to dream
by moon becoming ocean gleam
reflecting sun of yesterday
so fleeting and so far away

and yet so present as if real
in seeming warmth her soul could feel
awash in waves of joy again
that never were but might have been

the promise of forevermore
so dared as promise to explore
by windows giving line of sight
to yearning quickly taking flight

through curtain drawn and lowered blind
to waters always on her mind.

I Want You



I Want You...

True love completes in many ways
the beauty of a simple phrase
that speaks to having half a soul
that someone else would render whole

where "want" is not for brief embrace
of joy that time would soon erase,
but for the grace with which to age
by moments turned each as a page

recording lives far more fulfilled
and fear as art by faith bestilled
that weave unending story told
of love forever new and old

that says "I want you...so I'll see...
...my best become the rest of me."

The Infinite Number of Things Still Waiting to Be Discovered



Still Limitless...

Still limitless are things unknown
concealed beneath unturned a stone
that time, as tide long rushing by,
has rendered indistinct to eye

among indeed so many more
that tumble in to pebbled shore
of waters God foresaw as sea
of faith and possibility

that reason could not dare ignore
as future which forevermore
would beckon better means to find
what waits — eluding sight and mind

of tireless souls that scour the beach
for things unseen within their reach.

Blueberry Fields Forever



So Humbly They Cling

So humbly they cling to the face of our earth
as mirror of heaven and measure of worth
where one of the many more lessons they teach
is kneeling required to enable our reach.

They serve more than self by their labor of love
that mimics the Grace of the heavens above.
Depending on forces beyond their control,
they shelter and strengthen the hope in their soul

that rains will give back to their snuggling fields
the dream of arising to flourishing yields
that patiently wait for perennial plume
of petals emerging from populous womb

inviting those winged to come humbly and eat
who bear, as blue destiny, dust on their feet.

The Mimeograph Maidens



The Mimeo Maids of Our Primary Grades

With perfect Palmer penmanship
their pointed metal stylus tip
engraved in white on bluish page
the work that would become our gauge

as masters etched were made the source
of ink to paper they would force
enabling them to duplicate
assignments that would hold our fate

as classwork, homework, quiz, and test
becoming each semester's quest
through which in sum we'd be arrayed
by rank within respective grade

each glad for chance we had to glean
so much from maids of such machine.

The Archeology of Dreams



Siren Archeology

What from my dreams could be explored
that I would want to have and hoard
or once unearthed put on display
as proof of how I made my way
to what I am from where I've been
(and know I cannot go again)?

Far more I need to excavate
the circumstance today my fate
before it too is buried lore,
though I'll no longer stand before,
that haunts me in my restless nights
emerging as imagined sights
subconsciously involving me
in siren archeology.

Why I Left



Our Days Cannot Be Endless Night

The moment that we seized has passed,
 remaining but a rainbow cast
 reflecting in the risen dawn
 what never was, not what is gone.

Despite the joy we both professed
for closeness, seeming richly blessed,
 the truth that hearts forlorn deny
 can only color empty sky.

Our days cannot be endless night
that shields us from the mirrored sight
 of all we're not and yearn to be
 that somehow we must learn to free

 from deep within before we dare
to dream of love that we could share.

The Red Shoes



The Story All Too Real

At first it was a fairy tale...
of girl so vain that she would fail
to see the price that time exacts
for what are selfish, mindless acts

dismissive of forgiveness once
and thus embraced as willful stunts
ignoring what, as devil's due
such repetition would accrue...

...but now the story's all too real
of those who stoop to harm and steal
to fit their feet with finer shoes
by crime that ego dares excuse...

...until confronting devil's debt
and being caged with their regret.

Clarinet Marmalade



Becoming Jazz

When music still not yet a note
is sense upon the soul afloat
so seeming free and yet so bound
to will of wind and current found

by turn of sail and rudder steered
through course of mood and calm revered,
it is the rare and simplest state
of ship for which its "ax" will wait

until by lips on moistened reed
becoming jazz the soul has freed
that bobs on mellow waves of sound
as message in a bottle bound

to be discovered and replayed
as clarinet-ish marmalade.

Coney Island Wonder Wheel



A Lesson Life Will Teach in Turn

I've been around a hundred years
to challenge acrophobic fears.
Amusement as it ought to be,
I'm fashioned as the novelty

of rise above the ocean roar
and breathless plummet to its shore
as if you were the hand of time
whose repetitious fall and climb

were sweeping seconds far too fast
no sooner there than they are past
affording but a fleeting view
of thrill persistence must renew

— a lesson life will teach in turn
and dare the soul to quickly learn.

Star Quality



All That We Must Make Endure

Inviting our idolatry,
they share as common quality,
the colors they can orchestrate
to make a canvas imitate

the shape, the shadow, light, and line
of seen and sensed that intertwine
becoming their iconic stamp
to others lit as if the lamp

illuminating earthly course
of beckoning by greater force
to be unique in time and space
as courage and creative face

of, deep within, abiding lure
of all that we must make endure.

Butterfly Buddha



The Journey Not of Wing But Will

In meditation, flight is still
— the journey not of wing but will —
as silence spun, again cocoon
so shields the sound around it strewn

that words no longer form to hear
as senses dull in atmosphere
of inner calm where solemn peace
so gives to being its release

as chrysalis of joy returns
the virtues that the mind relearns
unspoken and yet sensed again
as they will be and long have been

for wisdom is to peace reply
as beauty is to butterfly.

Don't Forget to Remember



Unremembered Don't Forget

Each spring the sun and gentle rain
awaken yet again the pain
of love she did not understand
so precious was so close at hand.

The string was twisted in the wind,
the note she left was never pinned
on barren walls so she would find
that out of sight was out of mind

as unremembered "don't forget"
became the tulip of regret
that time and distance soon dismissed
as buried moment he had kissed

with patience of embrace restrained
that could have been advantage gained.

The Future



One More Day that We've Begun

The future is the sky that's dawned
where past is time and talent pawned.

Whatever worth it held is claimed,
though not yet praised, perhaps, or blamed.

Tomorrow then, each day is made.
It's never more than price we've paid
in yesterdays from which it came
expecting the eternal flame

by which, in turn, at risen light
we reach beyond another night
to find all we so long have done
as one more day that we've begun

where what unending now anew
is path that wiser we pursue.

Nothing New

Though science raves at having found
some Fermi waves that have no sound,
it comes as no surprise discerned
for children who by rote have learned

each letter is but zero sound
until within a word it's found
and in such use is clarified
by others that it sits beside

which still might mean it's never heard
despite the fact that it's occurred
as more than once is proven true
by "g" and "h" unheard in "through"

and "e" whose silence everywhere
so commonplace it's hardly rare.

Post Scriptum:

*Exceptions must be given due
both "a" and "I" can be words too
if spaces are to either side
and use as such is bona fide.*

Secret Person



Distant Kin

As joy of our humanity
the luxury of vanity
begets, so long as kept within,
a secret self as distant kin

to drudge of our reality
so steeped in the banality
contrived by choice and circumstance
becoming strings of wooden dance

while music no one else can hear
is melody in mind and ear
to which we step in what we read
or privately in public plead

while basking in sublimity
of hashtag pseudonymity.

Candy Heart Girl



Home to Heart That Does Not Hide

She gleams as if a cultured pearl
in rising and receding swirl
of trends and friends — the social sea —
Queen West so long has come to be

where galleries amid boutiques
will lure the heart that simply seeks
what art and fashion have bequeathed
as life and soul that they have breathed

into the city born to be
the strength of its diversity
and home to heart that does not hide
delicious joy of sweetened pride

in nation that was given birth
to celebrate collective worth.

Purple in Springtime



Passion's Red and Sorrow's Blue

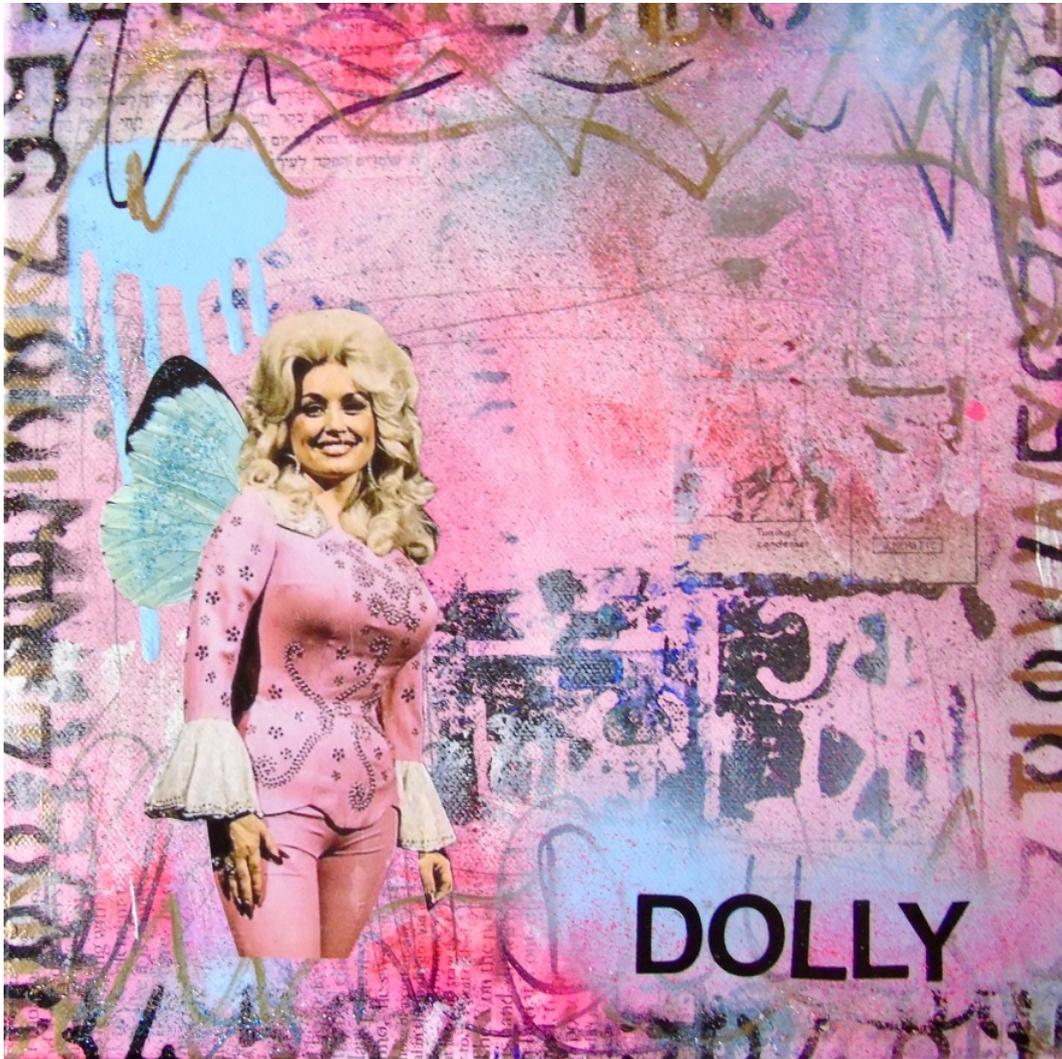
Forgotten in emerging green
the pale of winter dims unseen
where life awakens to its plume
of fertile multi-colored bloom

and hues bewinged that fill the air
defying dark of our despair
with whistled heed to life anew
and all that we have yet to do

where soft pastels suggest our youth
and vivid shades more vibrant truth
as passion's red and sorrow's blue
together cast the purple hue

of soul resigned to flaws of flesh
and season with which it must mesh.

Rodeo Butterfly



Remembered Fate

Your dream of fame was likely born
as coat of many colors worn
reminded you that being poor
must be a way of seeing more

important things to be assessed
than where we live or how we're dressed...
...for but by talent we pursue
— and all we do and do not do —

will we establish, truly, worth
of soul we own by right of birth...
...and yet too late you since have learned
remembered fate will be discerned

both by the place to which we rise
and cost of all we compromise.

Awake and Dancing



I Am Awake

I am awake and dancing now
though still I ache I move somehow
to song that long has been the dream
that glistens in my eye as gleam

of hope I hold before my fear
as faith in all that I revere
because of love in which I've grown
that I have shared as I was shown,

each step a flight from bloom to bloom
where I alight and then resume
transporting dust beheld as gold
fulfilling trust that others hold

for whom my dance becomes theirs too
and dignity that they are due.

Shy Di



Crystal Prison

Handpicked, she was but bud and stem
yet prized as if unpolished gem
for seed unseen that she possessed
that would become the children blessed

with all that was not hers but theirs
by right of claim to throne as heirs
while she was meant to be enshrined
beheld in vase that she maligned

as crystal prison — public view —
of fairy tale that wasn't true
that she would disillusioned flee
as bloom at least whose destiny

would know the joys of butterflies
and love beheld in other eyes.

World With Wings



The Song Surviving By Rebirth

They sense a different world with wings —
the joy that seeming weightless brings
when flutter stilled as sail to soar
finds lift of wind that beckons more

to keep aloft the limbs at rest
that have no sin to hear confessed,
that only know to find their way
through rose of dawn and heat of day

by flight becoming fervent search
for vantage of another perch
to share the simple warbled sound
of raw emotion solely bound

to sing to all that is their earth
the song surviving by rebirth.

Far Above Rubies



Unrelenting Passion's Gleam

A man's no more than half his soul
until the woman makes him whole
whose virtue as a faithful wife
becomes the gem by which his life

forever is more precious made
than rubies finely cut by blade
to clarify the blood red hue
of every facet eye can view

that glistens as if it were light
within and not reflected sight
of unrelenting passion's gleam
that is the love alive as dream

in softness of admiring eyes
that sense the worth of what they prize.

There are Galaxies Waiting to Be Born



Fear That Faces Finite Time

The universe impatient waits
in only seeming stable states
for birth and death of stars embraced
by gravity and thus encased

in clusters of their gas and dust
perhaps endowed to life as trust
by power never fully known
except as faith to wisdom shown

where conscience given flesh and bone
must bear, as burden it will own,
the fear that faces finite time
as sentence for uncertain crime

that birds will mock by calm innate
as instinct unaware of fate.

Our Lady of the Lost and Found



Angel's Heed

Life's measured by the lives you've touched
who've felt your soul and kept it clutched
to being they've in turn become
forever never quite as numb

to those whom they in turn have met
receiving long remembered debt
to you for moment they recall
when they had slipped but did not fall

because an angel intervened,
on whom their weakened soul had leaned,
yet never asked for thanks or praise
suggesting only lowered gaze

to others who would likewise need
such brief embrace of angel's heed.

The Espresso Perspective



Shades of Blakelock

She's both the crema and the moon
where colors echo pensive tune
to lyric word by word that seems
to whisper in the silence dreams

reflecting on a darkened mind
that even while eclipsed could find
the images within his soul
of which it never lost control

to fashion out of pigments made
with crudely crafted brush and blade
on surface of his own design
— that loving hands would first refine —

the nocturnes later recognized
as brilliance destined to be prized.

In the Middle of a Dream



Benediction

She only briefly closed her eyes
to whisper softly her goodbyes
that no one else would need to hear
as lasting moment to revere

the love that Spring would not renew
except, in hearts apart as view
of stars whose flicker might be shared
where both so long had stood and stared

at flowers draped now forming wings
and symbol of those precious things
that were at once both heaven bound
and here forever on the ground

where even in her lull she knew
she was no longer part of you.

Some Like It Hot



Tragic Success

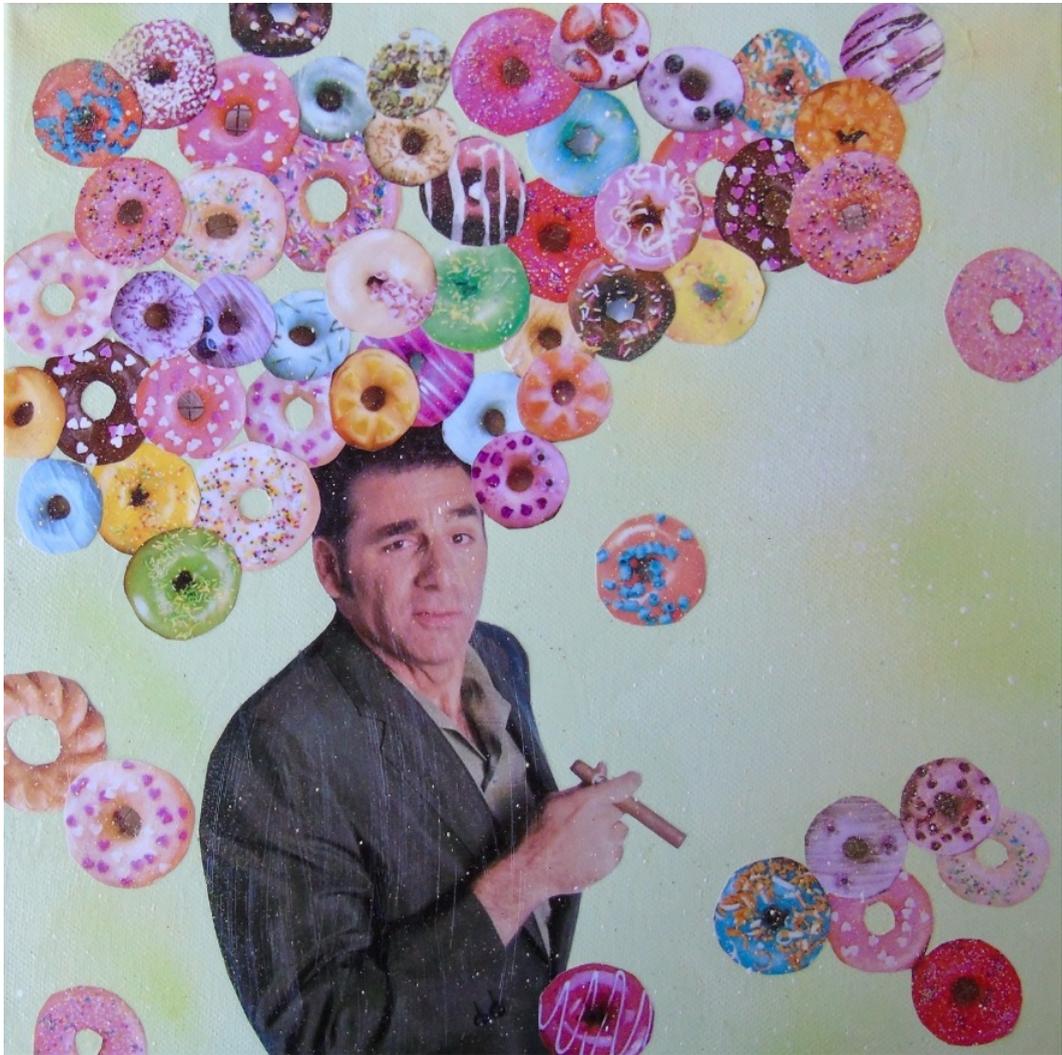
Some Like It Hot was plot inane
in which she starred as "Sugar Kane,"
a comic role that proved in fact
that Norma Jean indeed could act

despite, as we were soon to know,
the tragic way she played Monroe —
though not because she lacked the grace,
or gorgeous, photogenic face,

or curvature that satisfied
the ogling of a symbol eyed,
but rather failed ability
to deal with volatility

of artificial highs and lows
that pace and price of fame impose.

Hipster Dufus



Wise Guise

In humble guise at bagel chain
he modestly concealed his reign
as clever king of bogus schemes
that leveraged only others' dreams

as "pioneer" of leading trends,
declaring means are proved by ends,
in masquerade of role required
and suitably of course attired

deceptively concealing spoon
of silver making him immune
to ventures that were risk intense
for victims at their own expense...

...like bread he sold and claimed as dole
because he gave away the hole

Poem for Antoni Tapies



Intersection

We intersected, you and I.
My work in sum is my reply,
far more aware that my intent
is invitation to invent

that captures first instinctive sense
that has no time to be pretense
and then evolves as I create
and feel myself participate

reacting to emerging thought
becoming what my soul has sought
as verse and then refrain of theme
I recognize as life and dream

that bring together love and hope
as melody of means to cope.

Poem for Robert Motherwell



Rainbow Trail

I listened till I heard your art
and in the stillness, heart to heart,
I sensed what I was meant to see
— both you and I — as limbs of tree

whose roots were all that man has known
since conscience took on flesh and bone
and art became the record kept
of faith that into fear has leapt

becoming an enduring flame
— a torch that time will never tame —
rekindled by the language bound
in images that we compound

into collage of rainbow trail
where dark will never more prevail.

Shards of Soul

Submerged, forgotten, lost at sea
awaiting archeology
amid alluring siren song
of muse to whom they now belong

are shards of soul all widely strewn
that beckon to return as hewn
into assemblage or collage
and ode that speaks as if montage

to truly felt ekphrastic praise
for lessons of the yesterdays
now finished work and fashioned dream
of who I am that I esteem

as courage to remain afloat
and cross at last my castle moat.

Cut to the Chase



Fit For Frame

Cut to the chase the seamstress said
the pattern pinned and cloth are wed
prepared to serve as pieces fed
to needle of machine and thread

like media well put to brush
and canvas of artistic rush
to deconstruction juxtaposed
becoming a collage imposed

by skill and wit of seams unseen
allowing eyes to move between
the elements each reconciled
to dream envisioned, aptly styled,

and fit for frame on which it's hung
as if a song the soul has sung.

Library Discard



Though Discarded This I Know

If I were still upon a shelf,
and looked like my abandoned self,
and half of me were hollowed out
I could conceal without a doubt,

as if a gift of heaven's grace,
a plainly seen but secret place
where key or keepsake kept inside,
like love within your heart you hide,

would have the joy of life secure
as long as both of us endure.
No greater hope have I to find
except perhaps to be enshrined

in whole — or even only part —
as work of love becoming art.

Bonheur



Paper Doll

Some find the joy that fears no fall,
commitment but as paper doll
to cling so long as seeming fit
suppresses greater urge to flit,

anticipating endless flight
between such moments to alight
where love is merely fashion worn,
which never leaves the heart forlorn,

unfastened quickly and removed
— not disavowed, just disapproved —
and given wing in waiting sky
on winds where echoes quickly die

and heart unfeeling, unfulfilled
is never stirred and never stilled.

Happiness



Faithful Call

Some find the joy that hears the call
of trust that friendship must install
to blend two halves so both seem whole,
dependent on each other's soul

to fashion faith that will secure
a life to relish, not endure,
as love becomes each new degree
of Grace that it was meant to be,

reminded by contented purr
from softly ruffled silken fur
that truth of love is best confessed
by gentle hand to face caressed

and eyes entwined that see well more
than life so far has been before.

The Gospel of Joni...and Johnny

Each year, each month, each week, each day
is one more round we have to play
through seasons passing each in turn
that mirror game we come to learn
will end by round we do not start
when time arrives that we depart...

...to form unbroken circle found
in sky becoming common ground
for faith that made the soul endure,
by God forgiven when impure,
the journey taken it would mold
into the grace of growing old...
the game that Mom called Homeward Bound
she said would take us round and round.

The Echoing Green



Richer Hues

How strange we see in image green
the echoed drab of dull routine
that binds as though by stake and chain
the soul to path repeating pain

that needless nobly we endure
as if it were redemptive cure
for sin we might perhaps invite
by courage of much freer flight

where words "why don't we" cease to be
lament of our imprisoned plea
and start to be the echoed cry
to spread our wings to wind and fly

beyond our hills to richer hues
becoming far more joyous muse.

Angels and Demons



Forever Words

Though melody might not survive
forever words remain their song
in soul that made them come alive
and heart that hears where they belong.

A poet does not say goodbye
in message made to leave behind
confessing even loving eye
could not have seen or known the mind

that holds above all else a dream
as food for demons who delight
in sacrifice of self esteem
becoming carrion of night

where fear awaits an angel's hope
instilling faith with which to cope.

Corona on My Mind



Corona Free

In six foot bubble now withdrawn,
I'm here — although it seems I'm gone —
in my imagined sterile space,
hands disallowed to touch my face.

Though unafflicted as of yet,
I'm sinking into endless debt.
I'm unessential, unemployed
invited only to avoid

all travel that is not required,
and air (except through mask respired),
and hoarding what so many need
for hygiene each of us must heed,

yet told rejoice — you're virus free —
alive to die by tyranny.

What Do You Believe?



The Living Church

What we believe is not foretold
by what we've done but what we hold,
from which what we do next will come —
the depth instructive we will plumb

to separate the right from wrong
both in the near term and the long
defining faith we thereby give
to moment we cannot relive

and must accept as consequence
of what we were and will be hence
forevermore as soul we search
defining us as living church

of lessons given we receive
becoming moments we believe.

A Green Day



The Prison of Envy

From dungeon dank of castle pall
amid the dread of fungal sprawl
my mind an outer wall descends
to forest vaguely that befriends

as if now painted onto stone
so I would not be here alone
but with what I remember well
as heaven absent now my hell...

...sun lushly photosynthesized
in shades of green that mesmerized
the eye and mind so sensing life
unseen and yet so seeming rife

where sky could peek and see cascade
that waters freely falling made.

The Greatest

No longer Cassius now nor Clay
I am Ali. I am the day
that you will reckon with defeat,
the disappointment you will greet.

I am the speed you've never seen.
I am the wisdom you will glean
from agony of going down
and looking up at my renown.

I am perfection of my skill.
I am the power...and the will.
I am the butterfly and bee,
the greatest you will ever see.

I am the poet of my art.
I am the soul. I am the heart.

The Search



Journey No Longer

Now seldom plotted first and planned
(bewinged, asea, or over land)
or made through printed matter bound
by catalog and index found —

alas, it's down to text and click,
so painless seeming and so quick,
and yet but search that will return,
controlling what there is to learn,

restricted paths to be explored
that suffocate or leave ignored
the judgments we ourselves should make
to — right or wrong — become our wake

as travel leads us where we'll find
we are — by what we search — defined.

Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?



Time to Reckon

How philosophic — tongue in cheek —
to have her as if Dali speak
to question that's profound indeed
that no one else is there to heed

except for those who might behold
and notice they are growing old
as she, of course, persistent seems
to mock the clock that measures dreams

that are in any cosmic sense
a comedy of vain pretense
in void becoming little more
than elsewhere it has been before

where no one knows what time has struck
at moment in which they are stuck.

Better That We Seek to Be

Should roar of waves entice our soul
to cliffs of silence we extol
as means to find imagined sum
that we believe we have become

deluded by such self pretense
becoming real by its defense?
Or elsewhere should instead we hear
the voices making truly clear

who we, by deed, affirm we are
and how we wear success and scar
where silence, briefly, has its place
but does not bring us face to face

with better that we seek to be
that only others let us see?

The Fortune Teller



Try Again

Your fortune that is meant to be
is not foretold as destiny
once dealt as fate that you recall
and simply wait to have befall.

It is in strengths that you assert
and weaknesses that you divert —
the Tarot cards that you have made
not those that someone else has played —

that future will become the art
of following your soul and heart
to joys in which you find you bask
of never fully mastered task

where failures are but where you've been
directing how you try again.

Sunflower Dreams



The Legacy of Art

In red of passion's rains it seems
I flourish in sunflower dreams
by warmth of faith and friendship blessed
and, often, unexpected guest,

whose love is providential Grace
that unconditioned I embrace
aware as fully petaled bloom
of all that yet ahead may loom

in legacy that I resume
by seed delivered from my womb
as art that I somehow create
by process seeming so innate

for which so long I have prepared
and yet to me is scarcely bared.

You May Not Have Known



Richer Soil and Greater Room

I really think you didn't know
how much that I could want to go.
You were not sure you knew how tough
I was, but I was old enough

to know that home was where, by then,
I would not ever grow again.
My world was being redefined
to meet evolving state of mind

convinced that dream I had to chase,
the art that offered so much space,
would take me where I ought to be
as long as I believed in me

as budded rose I knew could bloom
in richer soil and greater room.

Smart Cookie



Puzzle of a Brilliant Mind

Her fashion is to purpose lent
as is the faintly hinted scent
pervading air that she'll assume
as budded rose that yearns to bloom

in golden shade and shape unique
revealing its withheld mystique
as puzzle of a brilliant mind
in disarray it hides behind

to seek the patience and resolve
of intellect required to solve
the trust her stubborn heart awaits
that diligence ingratiates

by pattern one astute discerns
is free of random twists and turns.

The Page Starts Blank



Floral Blaze

“The page starts blank,” she says, but means
already she’s projecting scenes
as trailer and projection stills
for work to be that spirit wills

and yet for now, in silence stored,
is still imagined storyboard
or milky glass of studied gaze
collaging life in still bouquets

or gypsum beach of brief embrace
where feelings etched that waves erase
become the moments when alone
that eyes will carve in cliffs of stone

as hope in winter’s cold malaise
for spring renewing floral blaze.

Be Still and Know



Become the Silence...

Become the silence of the sea,
the shell of life that used to be,
the work of art by nature's hands
that settles softly into sands

and leaves you for the moment still,
unmoved by water's seeming will,
absorbing sound you cannot hear
becoming hymn to faith and fear

as echoed proof of sight unseen
on which the soul will learn to lean
when as if bubble it must rise
— to consequence of looming skies —

so hoping its reward is wings
and beauty perseverance brings.

In the Beginning, God Created the Heavens and Earth



Work Revealed

So shapeless was the random realm
for which He held eternal helm,
He by design in time achieved
dimensioned system He conceived,

though still unlit, in striking hues
so strangely seen as browns and blues
disordered yet the sign and seed
of vivid spectrum He would need

to have Himself in full revealed
— to consciousness His work would yield —
forever as eternal soul,
fragmented yet transparent whole,

existence would evolve as art
becoming image of His heart.

Chord and Discord



The Storm Endured

Creative tension we contrive
to stoke effect that will survive
is more than musical technique
to heighten harmonizing peak.

It will in speech as well intrude
and art to bolster amplitude
of distance really found between
things forced to be together seen

implying greater truth disclosed
by fact of being juxtaposed...
like colors dark — and bright as well —
that run afoul of those pastel

yet even so leave eye assured
that calm surrounds the storm endured.

And Become



Let Future Not Be Random Fate

Let future not be random fate
you simply with aplomb await,
but rather risk to be embraced
as likelihood of being faced

and consequence that could ensue
— both given well ahead their due —
while you pursue your chosen dream
not merely as the moistened gleam

that twinkles in a wishful eye
but with the wings that dare to fly
in skies that you so long have seen
as avenues to verdant green

by plotted and yet free traverse
through joys in which the brave immerse.

Inside the Box

The twelve-inch sides that form the square
of canvas that begins so bare
are symbols of constraints that frame
each purpose at which we take aim

yet do not limit thought applied
to box we find ourselves inside
where conscience, wit...and soul...and hand
must govern all that we command

each knowing we are only free
by grace of what we all agree
is liberty within the law
comprising binding lines we draw

to circumscribe the moral, just,
transcendent love in which we trust.

Thinking Inside the Box



Some of these poems have appeared in *The Ekphrastic Review*.

www.ekphrastic.net

Portly Bard is a poet who appears often in *The Ekphrastic Review* (www.ekphrastic.net), where he was named a "Fantastic Ekphrastic" winner in 2020. He has also authored award-winning limericks and is featured in two official "Nantucket" limerick sagas.

Lorette C. Luzajic is an award-winning, internationally collected visual artist with clients in over thirty countries so far, from Mexico to Saudi Arabia to France. Her work has been exhibited in galleries, museums, hotels, nightclubs, banks, and lobbies; in dozens of arts and literary journals; in a magazine ad campaign, and as a prop in movies and on reality TV. She has been a judge for the Boynes International Emerging Artist competition out of Australia. She travelled to Tunisia to participate as a guest of the Ministry of Culture to participate in an international artist symposium. Her work has been used in a magazine ad campaign for Carrera y Carrera luxury jewels. Lorette studied for a degree in journalism but mostly writes about art. Her poetry and small fictions have been widely published, and nominated four times each for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. She has also been nominated for Best Small Fictions and Best Microfiction. Her most recent ekphrastic collections are *Winter in June* and *Pretty Time Machine* (Mixed Up Media Editions). She teaches art appreciation, mixed media art, poetry, microfiction, and flash fiction in person and online. She is the founder and editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*, a journal devoted to writing inspired by art. Visit her at www.mixedupmedia.ca

