

The Ekphrastic Exhibition

The Arts Center In Orange

Through March 30th, 2024

*Poetry Reading, Art and Tea:
Saturday, March 30th, 2- 4 PM*



The Firnew Farm Artists' Circle

And

The Poetry Society of Virginia
Celebrate a Cultural Experience

Art to Poetry & Poetry to Art



The Ekphrastic Exhibition

The Exhibition is a collaboration among poets from The Poetry Society of Virginia (led by David Anthony Sam, North Central Region Vice President), artists from the Firnew Farm Artists Circle (led by Trish Crowe, Founder and Director of the Firnew Farm Artists' Circle, Hood, Virginia) and The Arts Center in Orange, Orange, Virginia (led by Anna Pillow, Executive Director).

From the Poetry Foundation: “Ekphrasis “Description” in Greek. An ekphrastic poem is a vivid description of a scene or, more commonly, a work of art. Through the imaginative act of narrating and reflecting on the “action” of a painting or sculpture, the poet may amplify and expand its meaning.”

Simply put, ekphrastic poetry explores art. Visual artists came together with poets to inspire new works from each, resulting in a unique display of art and corresponding poems. Twelve artists and ten poets responded to each other's works. The artists selected a poem from submissions that inspired them and responded to it visually. The artists, in turn, sent photos of their artwork to poets, who responded to the art with poems.

Art and companion framed poems are on display in the Community Gallery at the Arts Center in Orange, where a Poetry Reading by the poets is scheduled for Saturday, March 30, 2 - 4 PM.

Free and open to all. Visit the Arts Center to view this unique exhibition, during days and hours below:

The Arts Center in Orange, Through March 30, 2024

Location: 129 E. Main Street, Orange, VA 22960

Hours: Wednesday – Friday: 12 – 8pm and Saturday 10am – 5pm

Phone: (540) 672-7311 Email: info@artscenterinorange.com

Sale of Artwork

Please email info@artscenterinorange.com with artwork title and artist name. You will be contacted to discuss method of payment. Clients should expect to pick up artwork from the Arts Center after March 30th and during regular hours. Alternative arrangements are acceptable (pickup on a closed day, local delivery, shipping) but may incur additional fees depending.

Cherryl T. Cooley “Blouse”
After
Lee Barker *Reflections*
Oil
14 x 11
\$250



Cherryl T. Cooley “Blouse”

"I've never looked through a keyhole without
finding someone was looking back."

~Judy Garland

You take it up a notch with rayon, silk,
tiny, mighty armhole hems sprouting brown
tight, pizzazzy muscles. An epimyth:
funneling feminine from a white blouse.

Center chest, a keyhole gets to the real
nerve of it. To blouse yourself, to cover
the heart and its body, to peek and feel
the deep fiber of what you can smother
inside: part of you in everyone else.

To know a garment, beyond its decor,
how it tells the thousand shifts you've felt
inside, rides your own facts into folklore.

Slide into it. Canopy what you own.

Drape. Set pretty. Surrender. Yes, put it on.

Ellen Penn Berry “Spirals”
After
John Berry *Going Home*
Photography, Tintype
8 x 10
Not for Sale



Ellen Penn Berry "Spirals"

Spirals;
Sweet tendrils of thought
Curl down
And around
Like smoke,
Swirling me closer
To some
Ineffable sense of self,
A peace beneath it all,
Droplets of that great divine
We are both in
And made of;
Infinite fractals
Bringing us leaps
And then microscopic bounds
Closer,
To what?
We may never know,
May not be capable
Of total knowingness,
Yet we are certainly capable
Of reaching
Into that dark depth
Of the unknowable,
The sweetness of being,
An eternal homecoming
Of the self.

Cathy Hailey “A Curious Place”
After
Pat Brodowski *Reflections of 1904*
Oil on Canvas, Gallery wrapped
12 x 24
\$875



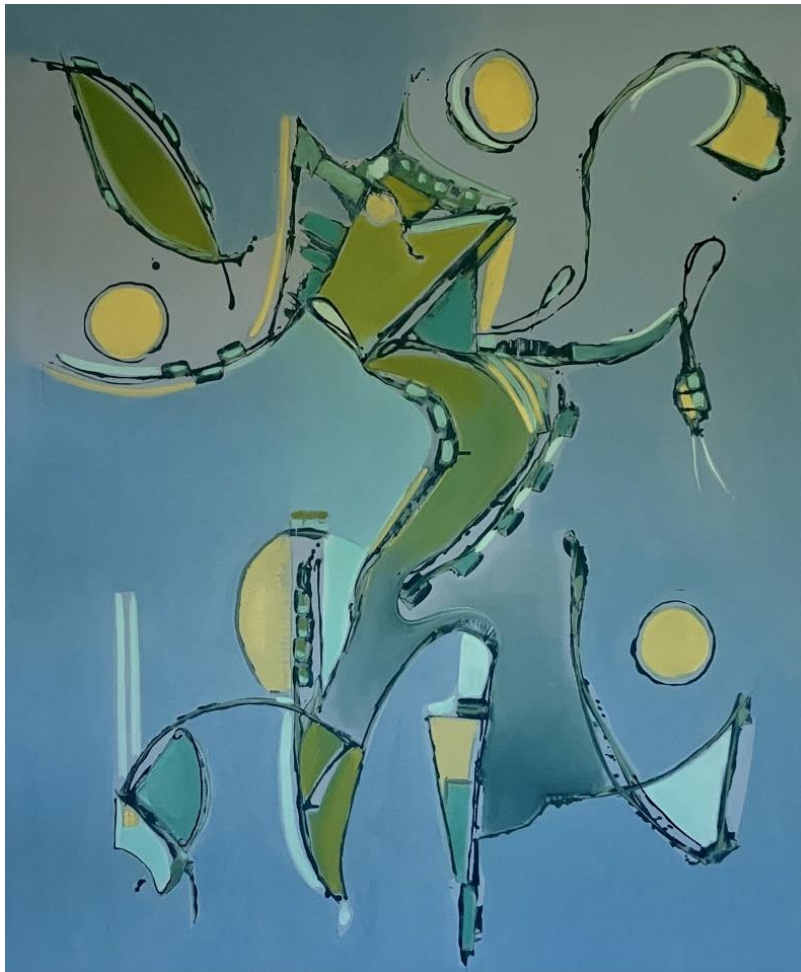
Cathy Hailey “A Curious Place”

A house of glass, swathed in sunlight,
summons us through a portico passageway,
its two-storied windows framed in white,
a palimpsest of yesterdays, the composite
layers of at least a century plus a score,
in a picturesque shop of curiosity and comfort.

A house of mirrors, reflecting its surroundings—
neighboring homes, gardens, orchards,
rural roads winding along a sparkling river
the ambient glow of sunrises and sunsets—
our gaze from the wicker chair quaint and clear
in the shadows of the Blue Ridge skyline,

A house of lenses, customers captured
in the unfocused light of silent films
leaning into mirrors, smiling or smirking
at instant makeovers with fanciful hats,
hard history hiding behind haute couture,
our rich yet roiled Blue Ridge heritage.

Michelle “MiCKi” O’Hearn
“Fool for Freedom”
After
Ellen Copeland *Escape from the Castle*
Oil on canvas
60 x 48
\$1,400



Michelle “MiCKi” O’Hearn “Fool for Freedom”

Dancing Jester masked in dripping make-up,
bound to raise the spirits
by smiling, mocking and subject to danger
at the service of the King.

Duties to manage the happiness of the Court,
so distraught at its armies
no joker survives the shouts to
“Kill the Messenger!”

Dead messages of truth entertain the enemy,
an audience of selfish delusion
screaming for the oracle to recite a story
of surface clowns told in deep jest of philosophy.

Laughter, applause
for the best ballad performed
earning freedom at the cost
of the comfortable lie.

Loud bells alert an escape from the castle
arise the loud fool,
singing songs
and Full of Freedom.

Cathy Hailey “Ode to Nature’s Blue”
After
Trish Crowe *Once in a Blue Moon*
Watercolor
23 x 17.5
Not for Sale



Cathy Hailey "Ode to Nature's Blue"

Like a Calder mobile,
blue bells dangle
from arched vines of violet.

The bluest bells
step out to dance,
dwarfing white wallflowers.

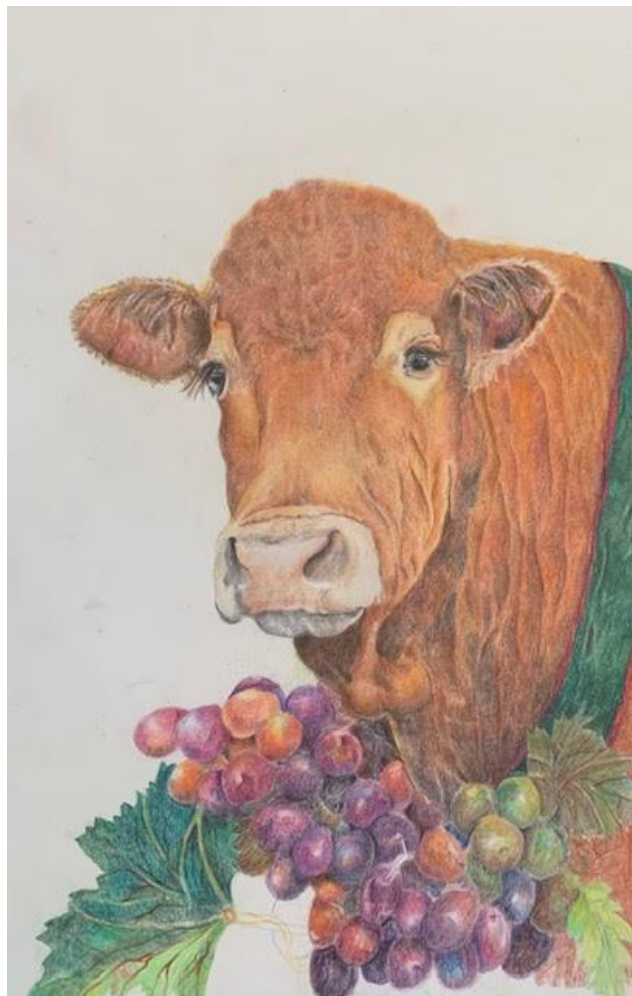
Topaz tutus
sway in aerial ballet,
accompanied by birdsong.

Like a blue moon,
rare gems soar—
tanzanite, sapphire, turquoise.

Bells chime
their blue charm,
twirling in the breeze,

leaving leaves
of citrine and emerald
embellishing backdrop.

Stacy Clair “Mistress of the Vineyard”
After
Kitty Dodd *Mistress of the Vineyard*
Color Pencil
14 x 10
\$450



Stacy Clair “Mistress of the Vineyard”

I watch her through the tall grass
My back to the thick oak tree
She sunbathes and basks
Sometimes she even calls out to me

I find myself coming here most days
I can get lost in those huge eyes
She uses to hold me with her gentle gaze
And I know her soul is wise

You might call me a fool
Or tell me she’s nothing but meat
I’d tell you you’re wrong and rude
But come sit next to me
You can see her fears
As easily as I show mine
Our desires are often mirrored
We just want others to be kind

That’s why I stay here for hours
My back against this tree
Marveling at the amount of grass she can devour
As she also watches me

I’m not sure if the man that owns her
Has ever noticed me here
Maybe he’s grateful for my nerve
Or maybe he just doesn’t care

Along the end of her enclosure
Is a set of broken boards
Guess they weren’t strong enough to hold her
When she decided she wanted more

There is a vineyard full of huge grapes
Just around the corner where her owner can’t see
She has made numerous escapes
But she always comes back and spends her days with me

This friendship I think we share
Might be one-sided at best
But just watching her way over there
My worries are finally at rest

Maybe she doesn't long for my company
And she isn't also sad and scarred
Maybe the comfort is only for me
From this sweet cow, the Mistress of the Vineyard

Stacy Clair “Coastal Curves”
After
Lea Doise *Coastal Curves*
Oil
11 x 15
\$875



Stacy Clair “Coastal Curves”

He held my hand inside his as we walked the water's edge
The sun was hidden behind the clouds
But the air was warm, and he turned to me and said:

“I used to walk the beach with my dad and hold onto his hand.
He seemed so big to me back then, I really miss that man.”

I beamed up at him, my smile 1000 watts
I loved seeing his face light up
As he skipped those little grey river rocks

This was our tradition every summer day
I'd rush out to greet him, in our unpaved driveway

He'd leap out of his truck with his arms open wide
I'd throw myself into them
And glue myself to his side
He'd grab my hand in his and we'd skip down to the old dock
He'd tell me childhood stories while we took our afternoon walk

But we could chat about whatever came into our minds
I liked to listen to him remember
Being around my age and how he passed his time

Sometimes his memories were filled with a sense of loss
Other times he loved to boast about how little a bottle of Coke cost

When he bought me my first fishing pole my face lit up in delight
We'd sit for hours spearing sweet corn on our hooks
Our feet splashing in the water as day turned to night

Those times were some of the best I ever had
A daughter just getting to know her dad

Even after we moved away from that special place on the coast
We'd find time to sit and catch up
I still loved listening to his childhood stories the most

“I never got to drink coffee with my dad like we do.
I am glad you make time for me, because I sure do miss you.”

Now I'm walking the water's edge again on bare feet
I relive all those summers inside my head
My lips turn up to smile at the flood of my own memories

I stop to squeeze my toes in the wet sand
And giggle in delight instinctively reaching back for my dad's hand

But it isn't there for me to hold
The footsteps behind me
Are now just mine, alone

I still talk to him though and tell him his absence makes me terribly sad
But I'm so lucky I had him as my dad

I'll always treasure those afternoons on the water
Where we laughed and smiled
Just a father and his daughter

Julia Travers “Smiling at Me”
After
**V-Anne Evans *Grazing the
Cowpasture Floodplain***
Oil on Linen Panel
10 x 16
\$1,200



Julia Travers “Smiling at Me”

Cobalt, Turkish, powder, peacock, slate,
Oxford, lapis, sapphire, baby, turquoise,
it flares in a morning window: a bright, over-eager child
it drapes over an evening horizon: a weary, cerulean elder
here, smog-infused tiffany hums behind a high-rise
here, royal crowns a free-haired festival dancer
here, an artist paints a storybook backdrop:
faded robin's egg hands, so wide we cannot read their fortune,
guide clouds slowly over a cow-grazed, tree-lined pasture
the naked blare of electric noon: we are taken by surprise
twilight's saturated, rounding edge: an indigo siren call
generous, suffusing the seas, ultramarine, deep, light,
we take it for granted: yonder perpetually blooming
in the corner of the eye,
we turn our faces up
to cool temptation,
to azure respite,
a luminous haze shielding our grounded days
from the unmapped ever ever,
absconding nightly to other lands,
leaving us unveiled

Jenna Villforth Veasey
“Looking At the Farm Like a Small
White Cat Curled Beneath the Mountains”
After
Jane Goodman The *Distant Farm*
Acrylic, 18 x 24
\$500

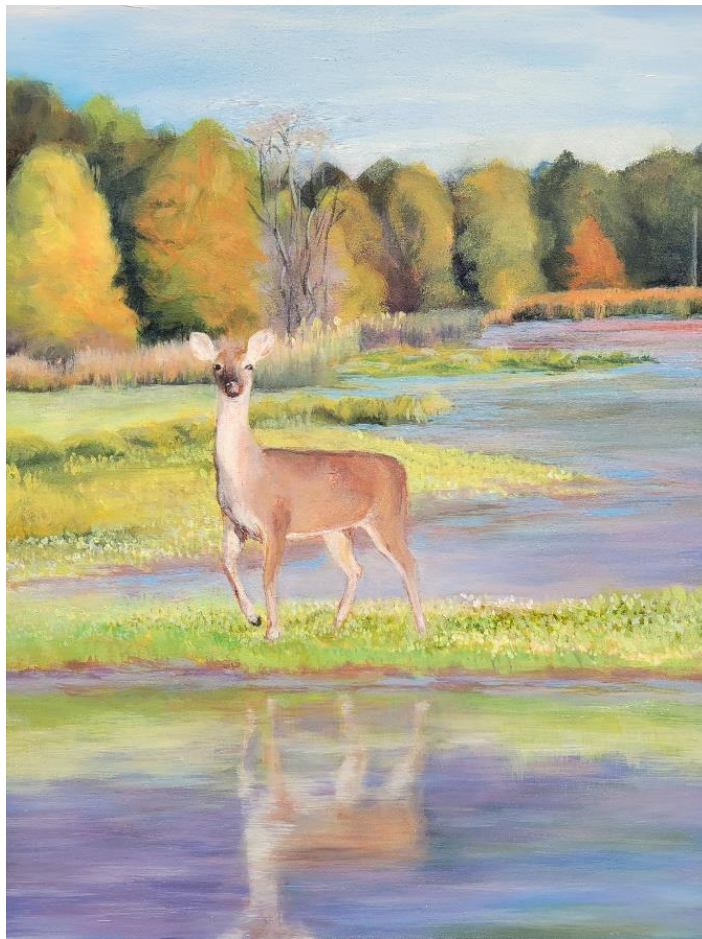


Jenna Villforth Veasey “Looking At the Farm Like a Small White Cat Curled Beneath the Mountains”

and the clouds, being clouds, no longer what they were
just moments before—a great ark, a bombastic ship pulling into port
while the bleat of goats punctuates this wide sky
a cool swirl of air kisses the ears of anyone listening.
perhaps a cat in the silo’s shade stalks its prey
stealer of grain. such abundance
who can blame them? the chickens do
their scratch-dance here and there. the damned
rooster makes his bugle, causing the sheepdog
to twitch an ear, ever owl- and hawk-wary.
even through closed eyes he can sense this:

a crepuscular tension commencing with the clouds’
pink edging, a gentle gilding where once blaring sun ruled.
and you and i
far on the hillside for exactly this moment
ready now to see

Jae Dyche “Refuge”
After
Kate Kraus *Refuge*
Watercolor
19 x 14
\$750



Jae Dyche “Refuge”

The doe, here, a front hoof
just lifted & still as if
at once struck by a gaze

coming upon it like
a rush through the alders,
in a moment it'll

lower its head to drink
as if it's just the deer,
the river, its still cool waters

& the still terrible quiet, but here,
in this moment, only the doe
& its black eyes, unblinking,

within one eye the wax
& wane of the hay moon,
wisps of cottonwood

seed & the wishes
that drift upon them,
the fleshy sweetness

of dropped crabapples
swollen in the sun.
Within the other, oblivion.

The doe, still paused mid-step,
as if, at once, acutely aware
of the pressing now, of

each sudden snap
twig & chit of wrens
hidden in the cedars,

& without time,
a wordless wonder
occupying its mind—

soon enough, though, the doe'll
set down its hoof & snuff
the tender earth where river

laps against the bank
before then soundlessly slipping
into the scrub,

taking nothing
further with it
as it goes.

David Anthony Sam “Watchword”
After
Jon Perry *Cave of Moria*
Acrylic
24 x 20
\$500



David Anthony Sam “Watchword”

Shards of ice,
frozen cobalt waves,
the stillness of time
in frenetic frieze.

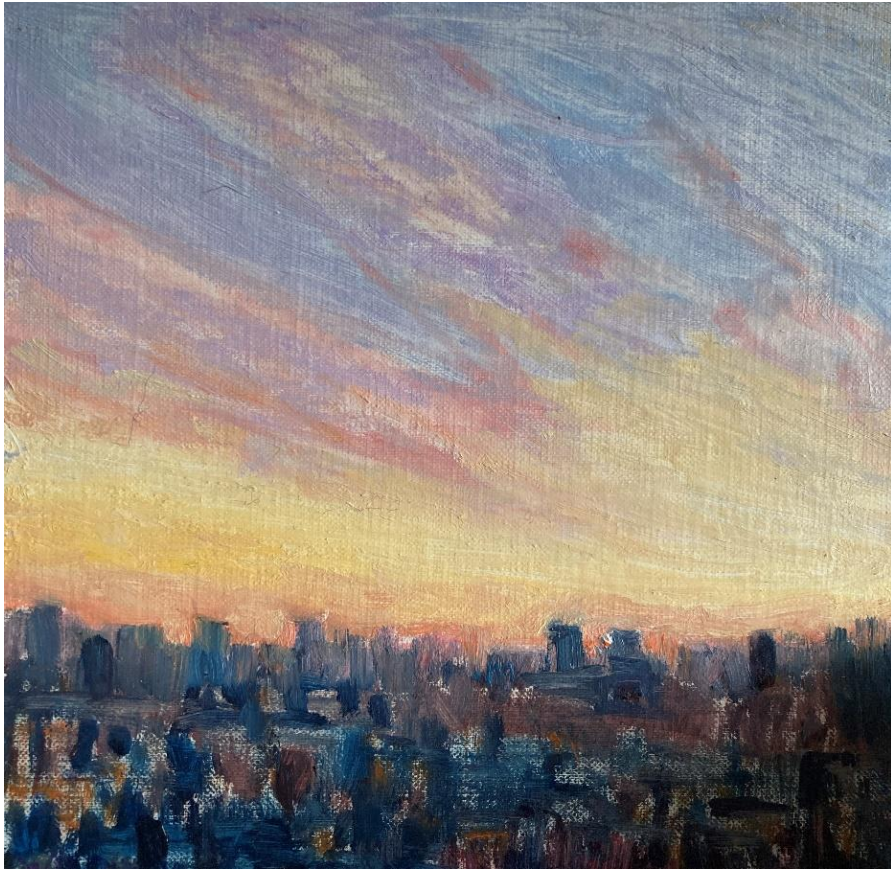
Where is my entrance?
Where my exit?
How does this chasm
fill me with design?
My shadow self
mines what it sees,
makes a false power
from sharp edges,

draws darkness
from the chiaroscuro
of desire for more—
more time, more life.

Is this the gateway
that finds the right word?
I would speak it
to the gray silence.

Shards of ice,
frozen waves of pale color.
Solace my empty hand
with the letting go.

Steve Bucher “End the Day in Beauty”
After
Claudia Wisdom-Good
Ending the Day in Beauty
Oil on Board
8 x 8
\$265



Steve Bucher “End the Day in Beauty”

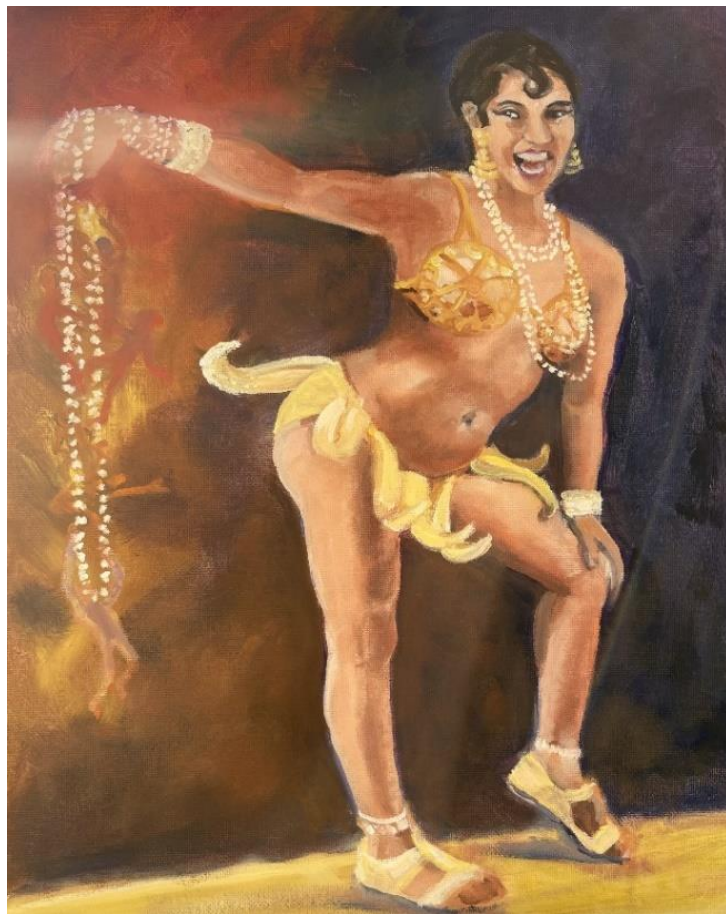
Even when all else fails and
Topless towers of Ilium
Burn crashing to your
Feet and hands grinding
Bone on bone in agony
Unbound

End the day in beauty
Even when October
Turns November and
Maple swirls of rose
Amber
Apricot
Turn to branches bare
But for withered brown
Life withdrawn before
Empty caws of crows
Unbound

End the day in beauty
In twilit glimmer
As tree line blends to
City line blends to
Sky line set aflame in
Sunset swirls of rose
Amber
Apricot
Unbound

End the day
Beauty bound
In lifted voice with
Heart held close ‘round
The mortal moment
Yours

Lee Barker *Muse*
Oil
14 x 11
\$250
After
Cherryl T. Cooley “Josephine”



Cherryl T. Cooley “Josephine”

“Is this a man? Is this a woman? Her lips are painted black, her skin is the color of a banana, her hair, already short, is stuck to her head as if made of caviar, her voice is high-pitched, she shakes continually and her body slithers like a snake, the sound of the orchestra seems to come from her ...” ~French critic, Pierre de Regnier, of Josephine Baker’s opening night performance at the Folies-Bergère.

At 8, after St. Louis rented me
to a family of traveling musicians,
I learned to charm the palate,
please the eye, be edible,
aromatic, seedless pulp.
(*Free the senses*, I’d say;
the mind is sure to follow.)
Parisian perky shuffled along
a leaf of black bottom jazz,
I’d steal into a taverngoer’s wit
while a whole room watched me.

(This they call intelligent art:)
High yella stalk,
slender and slinky,

(My bananas the best
subversive crop to mime.)

Men peeled me down
to chalky resolve
and devoured me.

Women got their fix
of fibrous calcium from me
for backbones.

Passersby slipped on this:
Juste la peau d'une femme.

(That’s what I was.)

Just. Skin.

John Berry *Pignut Hickory*
Photography, Ambrotype (wetplate on glass)
14 x 11
Not for Sale
After
Ellen Penn Berry “I feel sad for trees”



Ellen Penn Berry “I feel sad for trees”

“I feel sad for trees,
Never moving from one place”
—A lack of imagination—
We move about a whole lifetime,
And yet, do we know
The look of the place we were born
On the day we have a child
Or the day we leave this existence?
Do we watch the seasons,
Know when the butterfly bush wilts,
A new sapling sprouts,
Birds move in next door,
Squirrel builds a nest?
What a gift to live so slowly,
Never expected to be
Anywhere else, while you
Recover your branches from a storm
And send mycelial soup
To your lifelong neighbor.
Some neighbors will come and go,
But others stay steadfast,
And sometimes you have to watch
Even one of those, let go.
But all along,
A gift to only ever be
Expected to be,
Right exactly where you are.

Pat Brodowski *Familial Escapement*
Oil painting and found objects

Oil painting and found objects

36 x 24

16 individual oil paintings, \$75 each.

Entire assemblage, \$950.

After

Jae Dyche “Axis Mundi”



Jae Dyche “Axis Mundi”

At the center of gravity is a kitchen table,
chipped wood-laminate at the bevels and dusted

in whole-meal flour, skitters of biscuit dough
pilling off its apron, a gaggle of bank pens
and salt shakers, half-filled memo pads;

Sunday suppers, Grandad's chair nearest the door,
his ubiquitous tin of peaches, a golden-syruped

jewel wobbling on the fork and toward
his glossy pink gums; bread and butter
set out at eleven, replaced by brown gravy at 4:30,
Bless this food for our use and us for yours,
the universe easing to a more manageable pace

of gossip—the next door neighbor's daughter
-in-law or the school superintendent,
always someone running off or running back—,

of last week's doctor appointments, of baked ham
and scalloped potatoes, the bowl of applesauce,

of a woman who in the early morning sips
coffee with milk, alone with plain-hearted thanks.

Ellen Copeland
“Go find a jukebox and see what a quarter will do...”

Oil on canvas

48 x 30

\$800

After

Stacy Clair “If I Was a Song”



Stacy Clair “If I was a Song”

Turn the volume down
I’m lost, needing to be found
“You should see me in a crown”
Let the bass pound

Some lyrics are sweet and some are full of hate
They’re the ones I want to emulate
“I want to be the girl with the most cake”
If life would just give me a small break

It’s been a lighter fare lately
Don’t berate me,
“I like the remix, baby”
It fights my anxiety
My lyrics are about loss
Many songs are about anger and its cost
“I do my hair toss”
Imma bad boss

I can have fun too
Bounce between happy and blue
“My sweet Baton Rouge”
There’s so much singing to do

So turn the volume as loud as you can
Keep it there as long as you can stand
“Once I saw her on a beach of weathered sand”
You’re my biggest fan

Trish Crowe *Creating a Green Scene*
Watercolor
28 x 20
Not for Sale
After
Michelle “MiCKi” O’Hearn
“Creating a Green Scene”



Michelle "MiCKi" O'Hearn "Creating a Green Scene"

Mother of the land: soil to sand
Objects borne, living, dead, and absorbed
Left behind to get composted, eaten, evaporated
Human flesh stored in a box or ceramic jar as dust
With the emotional remnant of another's memory
The childish tear, the spousal worry of debt
The pain of loneliness with nowhere to rest bereft
Nothing to eat that will dissipate the screams
Crying to Mother when Father ignores
No ears to hear and no response from the land
Mother only to sand and we are not grit
Lest we plan the brain in a reflection of it.

She smiles upon the tiniest green sprout
Hears no worry or doubt as all her children
Sing into the morning of the sun
A droplet to moisten gently
Plummeting at high sky speeds
Touchdowns absorbed with excess dripping
From the curve of the curled leaf and taken in By thirsty dirt; a drink is shared.

We smile with delight at this interaction
And hope for a turn to play with more passion
Yet she looks us over recurrent and again
Never acknowledging our desire to be touched
Impatient, we toss technology to the sky
In attempts to trigger a response
Only to feel disregarded and lost
When the reply she targets to the sea or glaciers
We turn our craniums in forceful feign of satisfaction
To work on green salvation as a relentless distraction
From a single statement of truth:
Earth cares for her own ruins, naught for ours.

Originally published in The Poet's Domain vol. 26 "The Burning of the Leaves"
2010

Background: Using a single line of Laurence Binyon's poem "The Burning of the Leaves", Michelle then created her own poem entitled "Creating a Green Scene". Binyon's Line 23 "Earth cares for her own ruins, naught for ours".

Kitty Dodd *The Pine Box*
Color Pencil
12 x 12
\$350
After
Stacy Clair “The Pine Box”



Stacy Clair “The Pine Box”

The disappointment tastes like wine
On this parched tongue of mine
I talked for, what seemed like hours
To the stoic crowd, their faces all sour

The smell of pine
Is a favorite scent of mine
A box so shiny and seven feet long
They're playing his favorite song

His cheeks are not sunken like they were
Now they smile at me, “Oh, hello there, Sir”
The glue they use to keep his eyes closed
Smells like chemicals and it burns my nose

But I kiss his forehead and tell him goodbye
I turn to walk out my head held high
The sea of people part for me
I smile to myself that he's finally free

Lea Doise *Mist*
Oil
11 x 14
\$875
After
David Anthony Sam “Echoes”



David Anthony Sam “Echoes”

Morning mist rising
from the bends of the Rapidan
hovers above fields
that await their latest mowing.

The cool vapors drift
among the wilderness
of new trees, like smoke
curling up from fires

or drifting after being loosed
from cannon and blackpowder rifles,
their thudding echoing
in long dumb ears.

A fog bank forms,
a long gray line pivots,
then begins a slow march
into its dissipation.

A red bellied woodpecker
calls out a mimicry
of long ended pain
now risen into the trees.

A phalanx of young maple
stand silhouetted
against the rising backlight
of the reddened sun.

Daylight exposes
the long ranks of tall grass
that march with the wind
downhill against the woods

as a flicker drums
assembly from his
perch high above the field,
taking his careful hungry aim.

A company of starlings
flash their blueblack metallic
wings and settle
hidden among the gold blades.

Virginia's clay was red
before these fields and woods
drank from the dying,
and is incarnadine still.

The Wilderness smoked
with gray mists before
the massed men fell at
each other in desperate lines---

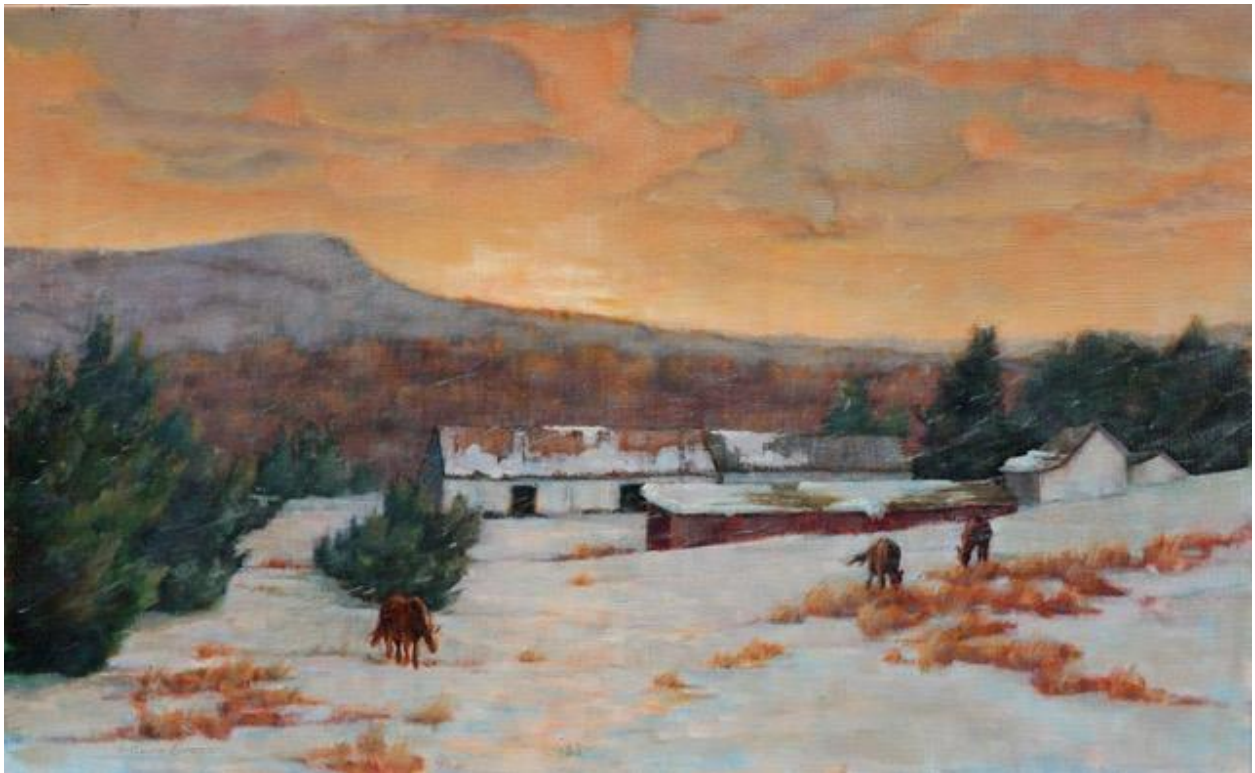
as this morning smolders
with miasmas that ghost
the hillocks raised by
geology or long dead men.
The grasses and trees
screeched with bird and squirrel
long before last cries
of dying stilled into wind.

And the thermals high
above it all have always
circled in black vultures
waiting to memorize the dead

in their own flesh.
The mist has risen now
into a long summer day.
The wind has stopped

advancing waves of grass.
At a bare place I reach down,
and gather the memory of red
clay into my fleeting hand.

V-Anne Evans *Left for Others*
Oil on Cotton
18 x 29
\$1,500
After
Steve Bucher “Left for Others”



Steve Bucher “Left for Others”

Pale pirouette
From a pendant sky
Dawn ascending
A solitary flake...

The breathless point

Till wind lays hold
And sky spills over
As my feet sink
Into the deepening day

Windswept howl of February
Whips slanting snow
While horses forage
In patient hope
Of blades overlooked

The barn's metal roof
Rumbles in the wind
Like a bass drum
Rolling down hill

Winter's hoar reaches
Through my boots
To sap my stores
As I turn stalls
In sepia shafts
And warming scents
Of cedar and sweet hay

Dark solace and quiet kinship
Drift together in dun and dusk

The blades overlooked

These I leave to others
Emptying myself as snow
Into a deepening day

Jane Goodman *Painting the Sky*
Oil
12 x 16
\$450
After
Jenna Veasey “Portal”



Jenna Villforth Veazey “Portal”

Sometimes the water, glassy-still
was a portal into a mirror world.

The girl would stare until the clouds
in the river became the only clouds

in the sky and she floated away
from this life into another world.

And sometimes, when she painted the river
she caught the sky instead.

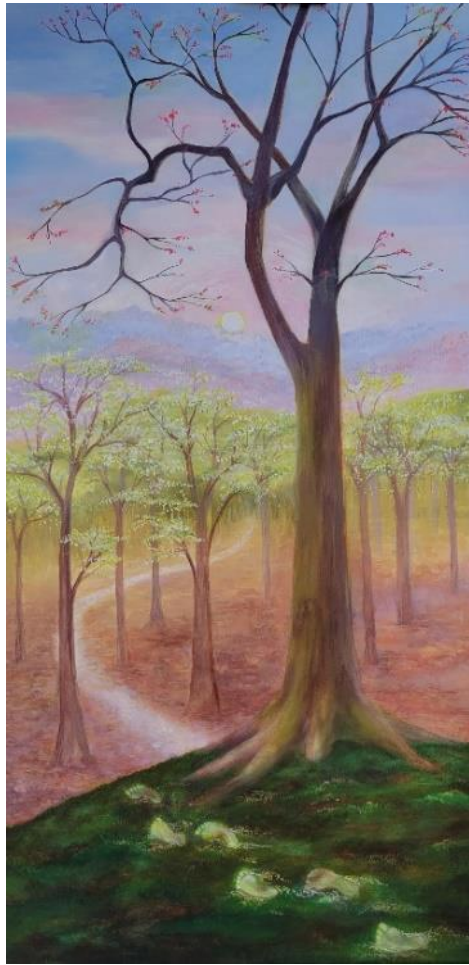
Clouds upon clouds upon clouds
like white caps on rapids.

When she was little and alone
she'd pretend to walk the ceiling,

laying on her back, legs dangled,
up or down had no meaning anymore.

Sometimes when she painted the river
she fell into the sky instead.

Kate Kraus *Perpetual Dance*
Watercolor, 48 x 24
\$950
After
Julia Travers “Wednesday Forest”



Julia Travers “Wednesday Forest”

The angle of the light
in the morning
is my church.

Where my bare feet rest on the ground
is the best place to be.

The wind arriving in the forest
to much fanfare and swaying
is my favorite song.

The quiet tree with its brave limbs
perpetual dance
and blinking leaves
is my friend.

Jon Perry *Summer's Edge*

Acrylic

24 X 18

\$500

After

Steve Bucher "Summer's Edge"



Steve Bucher “Summer’s Edge”

I set upon a path today
I thought I’d never tread
Mountain shimmering
At summer’s edge
Glimmering as though
Not quite there
A tale told to wide
Expectant eyes

Aside the craggy path
Expectant eyes alight
You stood with hand and heart
Outstretched
Knowing more than ever I
About this doubtful way

More than I
Though I’ve eyed
This rock-strewn way
Through days and time outspent
With hard and
Winnowing intent...

Yet foot unsure

I set upon a path today
Your steady hand to guide
My stumbling step through
Sloping stretch in heartfelt silence
As neither knew
The other’s words

Words without
Walking Summer’s dying edge
Hand in glimmering hand
Amid this haven’s hush and
Stilling rush of loved ones
Lost

Smooth as whiskey aged
Each step a dram
Old souls lost in
Oak and barley
Love from a glass
Round and berry ripe

Heedless of the path ahead
Or left behind
We walked the shallow ground
Just beneath our feet
As day grew dim and hunger
Loomed above the crags

Above our lagging limbs
We spied and reached aloft
Into night as soft...
As whisper

Roses
Strawberries
Plucked from a pendent moon
Round and berry ripe
As our eyes told
The gathering tale

Claudia Wisdom Good Across Continents
Oil and Collage

12 x 20

\$385

After

Cathy Hailey “Across Continents”



Cathy Hailey “Across Continents”

Standing on the gray wooden back porch,
just outside the kitchen door,
she bends to pull a wet undershirt
from a frayed wicker basket,
clipping one sleeve, then the other,
to the line with old-fashioned clothespins,
the ones little girls decorate to make dolls,
drawing faces on knobs, adding gingham
cloth for dresses and yarn for hair.

She pushes the line out,
the rusted pulley screeching,
to make room for another wet garment.
Routinely, she performs her chore,
gazing out into the backyard
eying the pears on the tallest tree,
wondering when the fruit
will ripen for picking,
when she will wrap each treasured
pear in a page of newspaper
to place in the Frigidaire drawer
down in the cellar for weeks ahead.

One clothespin after another
connects the family's wash to the line—
reaching a syncopated rhythm
of screeches and slides
followed by a beat of silence
before she pushes the line out again,
extending the hanging clothes
like party decorations across the yard
to the back fence where grapevines
climb, large leaves protecting clusters
of round green grapes with hints of pink.

She repeats the ritual with pride,
perhaps remembering an idyllic
childhood in the ancient world
when she clipped a line

of pants her father dyed,
dripping blue into the soil—
the blue of the Aegean,
the blue of the Greek flag—
each drop beading up,
then bleeding through
the Asia Minor soil of her youth—

before the population exchange;
before living as a refugee in Chios;
before crossing the ocean in steerage
to reach a land of prosperity and promise;
before fathers, uncles, husbands
marched to their deaths;
before aunts and sisters rubbed faces
with ash and dirt—a disguise—
to avoid atrocities performed by men,
to escape an enemy who once posed as friend,
who shared a sun-soaked countryside
where sheep and goats grazed
beside stone houses that faced a harbor
filled with pastel fishing boats
surrounded by white pebbled beaches,
where grapevines crisscrossed hillsides,
providing sweet fruit and dry wine
for shared meals and celebrations.

Again she stands on the wooden porch,
her reverie interrupted as she removes
the last garment she clipped to the line,
folds it with neat creases,
and places it in the wicker basket.
She reaches up, anticipating
the slides and screeches
as she pulls the line towards her
to release the next clean shirt.
The syncopated rhythm in reverse
serenades her as the fresh scent
of clean laundry wafts in the breeze,
bringing her pleasure in a place of peace.

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