

# **The Art of Poetry: An Ekphrastic Evening**

*A Collaboration of Art and Word*



PITTSBURGH **Society of Artists**

# **FIFTY-FOURTH ANNUAL Exhibition**

**Friday, November 22**

**6:00 pm to 9:00 pm**



**PANZA**gallery

115 Sedgewick Street, Pittsburgh PA 15209

## Background

In conjunction with its 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Juried Exhibition, the Pittsburgh Society of Artists Guild endeavored to engage writers with the local community with intent of developing an event of ekphrastic poetry. This would serve to mesh the communities of visual fine art with the written arts. The plan was that writers would craft unique written works that were motivated by the artwork on display in the annual exhibition.

An outward reach was made to the writing community through PSA's members and others. Eleven poets responded to the call and agreed to participate in this journey. The fruits borne by these efforts are presented in this program.

## Acknowledgements

To all who participated (artists and writers), who supported, and who attended the evening of poetry, we are deeply appreciative and thank you.

## The Pittsburgh Society of Artists

## Ekphrastic Poetry

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

## Writings and Order of Readings

Eternal Sleep / (We Keep Living Anyway)	Kathryn Zapalo
Resolute Hope / (Dark Matter)	Laura Goris
The Theory of Levitation / (Geeks)	Chris Zapalo
Revolutions / (A River with No Name)	Kathryn Zapalo
Samponia at Night / (Samponia at Night)	Shaheen Dil
City at Night / (Samponia at Night)	Chris Zapalo
Elegy for an Artist Who Loved Cats / (Cattooed)	Stuart Sheppard
FUMO (Clairton Coke Works)	Kayla Sargeson
The Departure / (Safe Travels)	Alyssa Sineni
She is Sunken In / (Global Smorgasbord)	Chris Zapalo
Reflections / (Woman)	Kathryn Zapalo
Visions of War / (Eyes of the Crucifixion)	Kathleen Trew Swazuk
Choices / (One Lies, One Tells The Truth)	Kathryn Zapalo
Bridges / (My Inner Spaces)	Bob Walicki
The Garrulus / (Mojave Ozone Jay)	Chris Zapalo
Awakening / (The Edge of an Awakening)	Deena November
After His Death / (Wall) *	Mary Ellen Raneri
Commemorating	Kathryn Zapalo

\* Inspired and created during the event on 22 November 2019

## Eternal Sleep

The air outside,  
resembles that of cool murky waters,  
yet still remains full of life,  
frost bitten trees loom in the distance,  
shriveled appendages,  
pushing all efforts to conserve energy,  
who will make it through,  
this bitter cruel season,  
if not for the God of sun and Goddess of sight,  
had these Titans not forged their bonds,  
my dearest Selene,  
how ever could we stand witness,  
absorb your radiance,  
the ocean tides would long for your guidance,  
it's in part to them,  
we gather this night,  
gazing upon this cave entrance,  
bearing witness,  
as you visit Endymion,  
a tale of lovers as old as time,  
we shall lie in wait,  
hunker low on this crest,  
hoping to catch a glimpse,  
begging that he wakes,  
once more again.

- Kathryn Zapalo

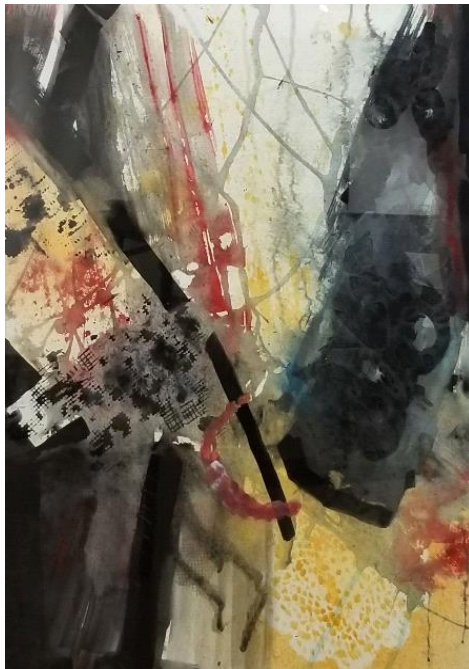


We Keep Living Anyway – Tony Cavalline

# Resolute Hope

In the dark spaces  
before dusk,  
Shafts of splintering  
golden day  
Collapse.  
Remnants of sunsets  
fading black.  
Desolate landscape  
beyond mahogany days  
spun senseless  
with longing  
into melancholy.  
Woven threads,  
pulled taut  
between poles.  
Tactile cords of salvation,  
Suspension  
Quiescence  
A slow cadence  
fills the darkness.  
Life blood,  
Pulse  
of a resolute hope.  
Promise of dawn,  
banishes the  
dark matter.

-Laura Goris



Dark Matter – Kathleen Zimbicki

## A Theory of Levitation

A theory of levitation is put forth with clay bricks and cyanide close at hand. The stool is pumped three times. Pencils are sharpened. The outlets arch. Whippets charge across the ceiling. The lab assistant runs a fever. Klaxons sound the alarm. A Chemical fire! The extinguishing system puffs in answer. A backup generator screams in delight. The good doctor wails, "Get those dogs back in their cages!" The antigravity wears off. "Where is the smoke coming from?" A naughty bit of calculation. The ghost of Tesla sings the eulogy. Our funding has been cancelled.

**Chris Zapalo**



Geeks – Jody Shell

## Revolutions

A self-professed madman,  
yet one must contemplate,  
the many hats he has worn,  
that of a son,  
a twirling top of innocence,  
of a first love, fragile masculinity,  
a man, then husband,  
one of pride and stability,  
becoming a father, a cap worn thin,  
lost to time, thinking more now than of himself,  
but as an extension,  
the hand marking seconds, hastened it's pace,  
this new hat, one filled to the brim with wisdom,  
bestowed to all, as any Grandfather could,  
we come to see him now, as he is, this dome now fully uncovered,  
no longer finds need for facade,  
sitting quite patiently, by the river with no name,  
for how can you name something,  
that which is no more,  
for now it lay to waste and barren, dry and full of life no more.

Kathryn Zapalo

A River with No Name –  
Manjushree Roy





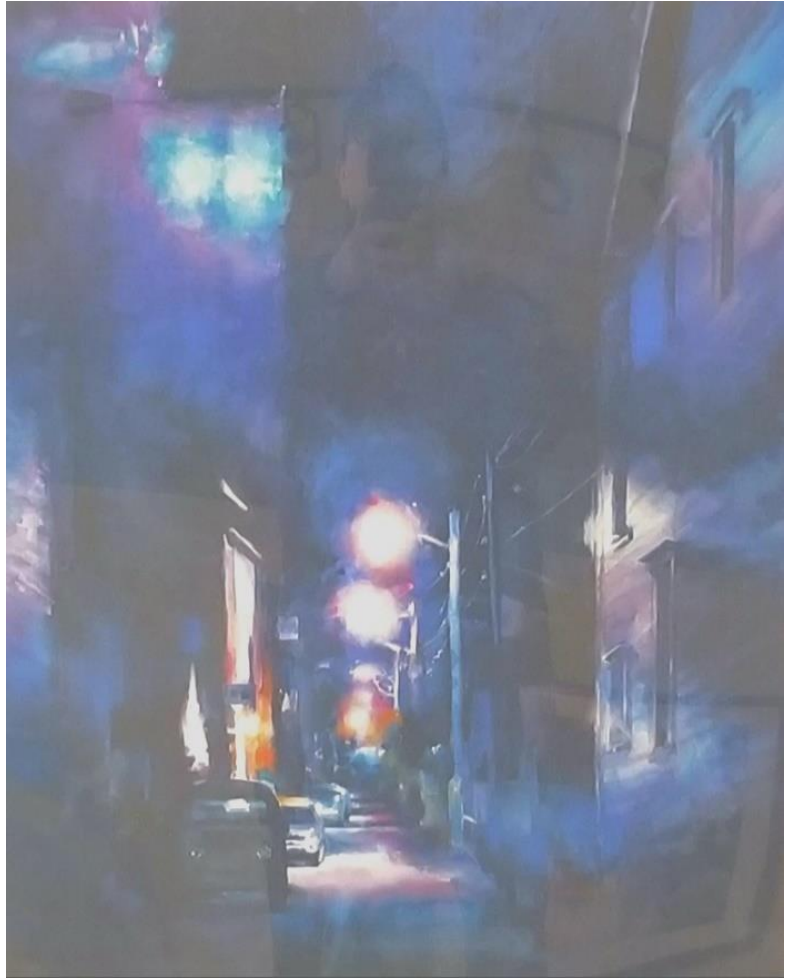
## Sampsonia at Night\*

*\*On a water color by Peggi Habets*

Whatever else may come,  
the lamplights' frosted glow  
will burn upon this empty street,  
trucks parked against the black curb  
will never stir  
with headlights shining,  
their signals will not blink  
as if to say: "My turn now,  
my turn to skid off this dark frame  
into the pink and purple night."

Elsewhere the world may churn,  
workers strike, and gunsights aim,  
whatever links may form and fail,  
this sky will never fade to gray,  
this blackness will not yield to light,  
these structures will still stand,  
windows shut against the cold  
of endless night, and dreamless sleep  
still fall upon the lavender blue haze  
of Sampsonia blooming by night.

Shaheen Dil



Sampsonia at Night – Peggi Habets

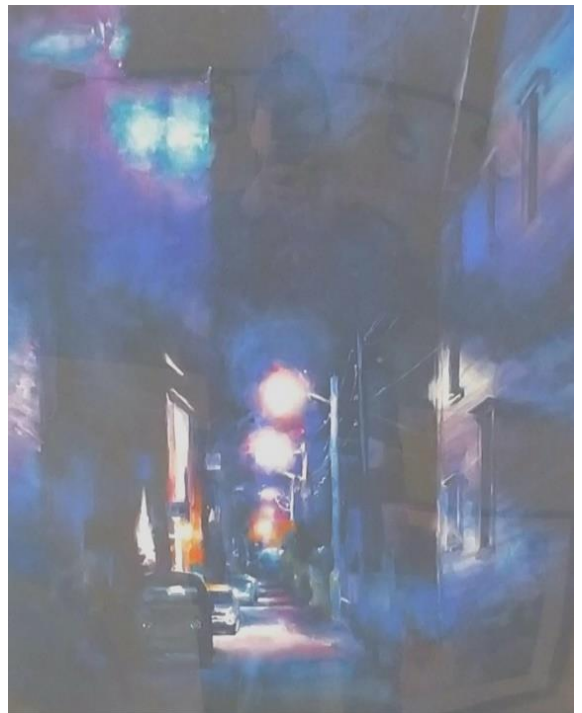
## City at Night

Fifteen hundred milligrams of steroid,  
Three high balls, a nasty crick in the neck,  
tumbling from saloons, the pavement stretches out,  
An immense body at rest  
And, simultaneously, all in motion  
open alley's shape the city's breath  
Boilers fume away,  
the scratch of heavy boots are thunderous in the quiet,

There is something here, a washed out color,  
A shadow pigment, an overturned inkwell,  
Cyan (or violet?) set on a chipped brick veneer,  
The lens takes up position,  
every fifty feet, eighteen hundred lumens shine down,  
and still the darkness rushes to fill the space.

How the buildings front, square up, crowd in,  
dwarving the drunks,  
pushing the air into columns,  
muting the trucks with deliveries.  
A piano plays uncertain, the squeal of a faulty timing belt  
And struggle to find a warm bed.

**Chris Zapalo**



Samponia at Night – Peggi Habets

## ELEGY FOR AN ARTIST WHO LOVED CATS

This is how symphonies should end.  
Not in darkness, or light.  
But with the fog coming in.  
It feels like impressionism, you said,  
As I lay beside you on the dock.

I guess you were still in the boat.  
Your voice becoming softer under  
The slapping sound of the water,  
Like someone with no jazz  
Trying to invent rhythm.

Do you remember how the clouds  
Would squeeze through the window  
Of your studio,  
Resting on the canvas  
Like tulle on a little girl?

After a while I couldn't hear you anymore.  
I saw the untied mooring.  
Maybe it was just the wind,  
Pushing you away.  
Or the fog taking you back.

This is how symphonies should end.  
Not in darkness, or light.  
But like crickets,  
Slowly bleeding  
Into the silence of dawn

Stuart Sheppard

Cattooed, Soft Comforts  
– William Karaffa



## Walking Over the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge

—for *FUMO*

It's the first of September and my grandmother calls  
to tell me her cousin's husband died.

They were married 72 years.

I've spent the past two thinking about moving to Savannah,  
but there's something about the brown water of the Monongahela  
that keeps me here, something grounding in the dirt, the smoke blowing  
from whatever factory is still operating across the river.

I look for the graffiti tags like old friends: *AWAKE*, *KURU*,  
*FTC*, *RIP DOK*, *SKITZO* (who I think is in jail  
in New York).

In Savannah, there's nothing to hold onto.

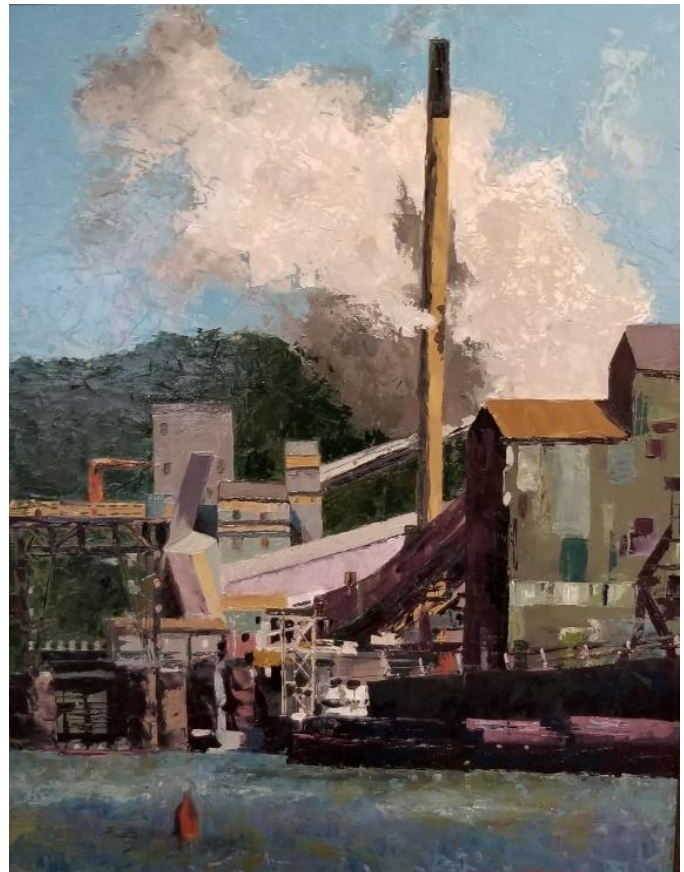
I float on dry land, cling to men who are just as slippery,  
say *I love you* in the clichéd, moonlight way.

I don't know how people stay married for 72 years—  
or why.

Last night I looked up “how to forgive” on the internet—  
nothing new there—

so I move through the Armstrong tunnel like I'm undercover,  
cross the bridge with dirty feet, dirtier heart.

Kayla Sargeson



Clairton Coke Works – Paula Martino

## The Departure

It was the violet silk of morning.  
The tree tops swaying  
ink against black  
at dawn.

The birds in the thickets,  
their bodies disappearing  
like fragments of light  
into song.

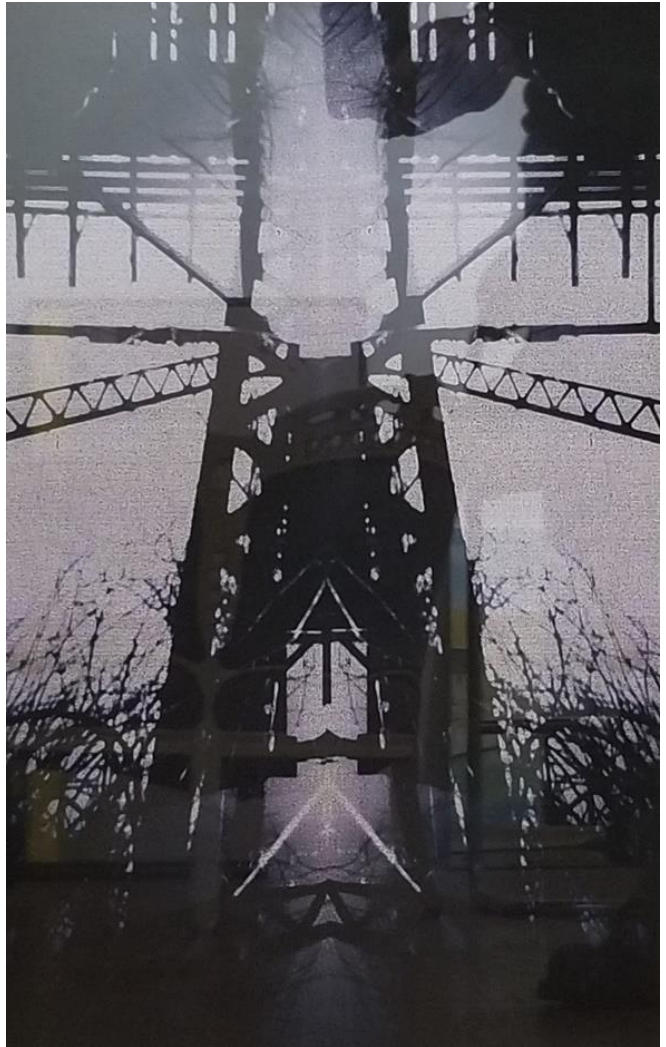
Say it was November  
and the branches  
were almost barren.

And the sound of the train  
from a distance  
unfastening the locks  
like a drum of warning.

Maybe it was the weight  
of the sky breaking  
from the years that  
we carried and scraped  
as we dragged it along.

It is here then,  
in the ruins  
that you will yourself,  
crossing pathless,  
again.

Alyssa Sineni



Safe Travels – Tiffany Whitfield-DeCosmo

## She is Sunken In

She is sunken in  
Descending beneath the canopy  
Discovering the floor where cast offs assemble  
In the abscission planning a move

Here she assumes control  
Arranging variables of temptation  
Weighing values, setting store,  
Putting nutrition below shape

A meal is grounds for disaster  
Have a touch of rice paper  
Unresponsive skin  
Still all is not as it should be

Numbered folds of dressing gown  
gathered to shrink from starlight  
Hide from all comparisons  
Her collapse is no admission

In time she becomes food  
Found by the little ones  
Hand to mouth, egg to larvae  
But oh those discarded shells.

- **Chris Zapalo**

Transforming the Global  
Smorgasbord of Disorder –  
William Karaffa

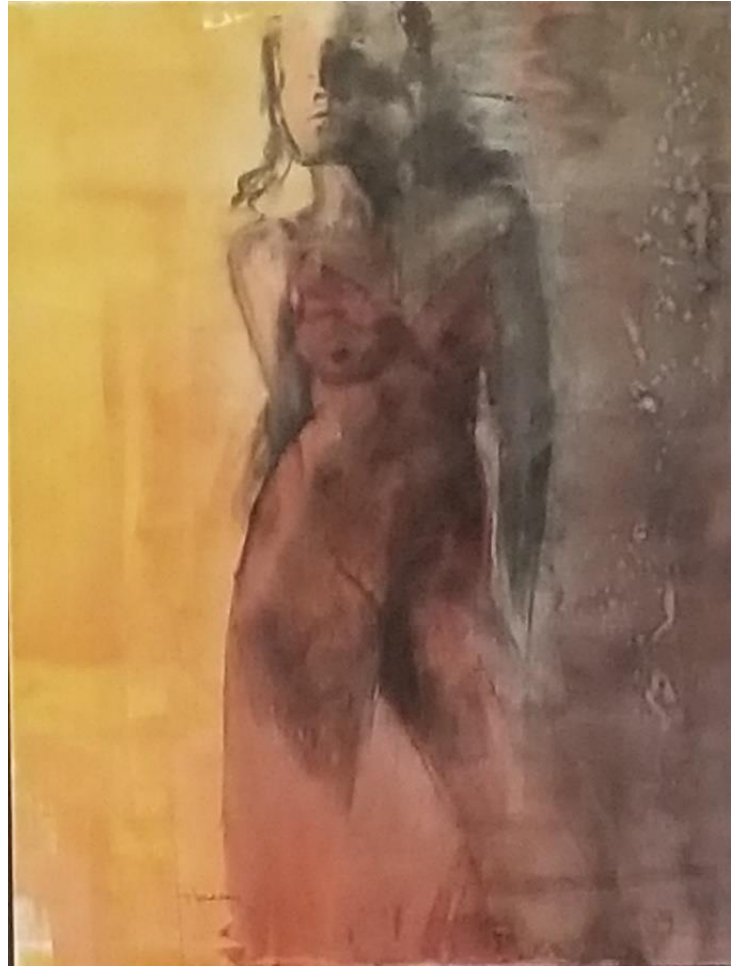


## Reflections

Had we the ability to look upon her feet,  
we would understand the path she's taken,  
don't mistake this kindness for weakness,  
resurfacing from more pain than imaginable,  
she hides strength,  
beneath such a soft exterior,  
she will play coy with her wit,  
a favorite advantage,  
waiting for others to underestimate,  
those struggles made her indestructible,  
some have rumored angelic properties,  
yet, mark her and she will release a tsunami,  
once upon approach,  
making inquiries of her past,  
these were the words she spoke:

From my view,  
I've known Heaven,  
seen it as the light blinded,  
to one side,  
I've known Hell,  
to have been chained and binded,  
cries rang out,  
wanting to die young,  
yet, I'm still standing tall,  
there remains a skip to my step,  
from now on out,  
I'm bolder,  
thankful to have someone,  
holding my hand,  
as I die,  
many years from now,  
and older.

Kathryn Zapalo



Woman – Mary Jane Hadley

## Visions of War

The eyes,  
like the faces I see in my dreams.

They have no names I can remember.

The eyes,  
like windows reflect the pain  
the wounds of war.

The eyes, like the faces.

They have no names I can remember.  
On wounds I will never forget.

Kathleen Trew Swazuk



Eyes of the Crucifixion – Patricia Hill



## Choices

Grasp hold of the horn,  
a quarter turn to the right,  
push past the wildflowers of yesterday,  
you will find an illuminated path,  
in lies this, my Knight,  
the truth you wish to seek.

Here marks the spot,  
where the barks been rubbed clean,  
newly worn velvet antlers finding release,  
grasp hold of the horn,  
a quarter turn to the left,  
this is where the weary doe will find rest.

Regardless of your choice,  
no matter the path you take,  
you will know joy,  
there will be sorrow,  
sometimes even death will follow,  
but it's not where we go,  
it's not who we meet,  
it's the scars on our hearts,  
the blisters on our feet,  
it's the way we take our pains,  
mold them anew,  
the choice is within,  
how will you change their view?

Kathryn Zapalo



One Always Lies, And One Always Tells The Truth  
– Tony Cavalline

## Bridges

I'm driving to work one eyed again, and spinning  
up my driveway, into another winter of craters,

and slow lanes, work truck lights spilling  
into the black over the buck I just miss

down River Road. and whatever empty miracle  
that's kept me here between double lines,

spilling coffee down my chin and neck,  
veering into the lights from the semi

drifting into my lane. Sign says that this  
is the last week for the McKeesport bridge,

and I can feel it in the shaking, decay of steel,  
ripped drapes to catch the drift of paint, billowing

like an apparition. We have one more day of this,  
but the workers are here, already airborne, strapped to cranes,

chained to girders and working in the hover and split air,  
no faces, just the shadow of gesture in this morning dark.

Looking at them, I don't want to think I'm locked into this life,  
to be counted among the fallen, but I've left the radio off,

because I want to hear that hawk again from yesterday,  
lost, but singing away from this freezing sun.

I'm thinking of dinner at 6am, how you said you might want  
to go out tonight and *what do I feel like?* But my mind keeps falling

back to the article I saw 30 years ago, taped to the toolbox  
in my father's garage, yellowing, but intact of the 40<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Tragedy.

*10 year old victim, body recovered after drag racing accident*, it said,  
my father among the survivors. And I'm imagining him ten and invincible,

standing on the other side, wanting to do it again, lighting one up and laughing,  
waiting for that last race, wondering who would win.

Bob Waliki



My Inner Spaces – Deborah Lieberman

## The Garrulus

Due to new federal guidelines restricting the use of plastics,  
We've chosen parts of *Rattus Norvegicus*  
To form the necessary components assembled here.  
The creature's hide forms the neck strap.  
Fragments of the skull: the cone and rings.  
The tubing that joins the two chambers is large intestine.  
And so on... and so forth.

Conscientious objectors to this method of biological recycling  
Would do well to remember that while many creatures suffer  
Under the constraints imposed by our evolving environment,  
*Rattus Norvegicus* continues to thrive.  
Unlike, our poor friend the Garrulus here.

## Chris Zapalo



Mojave Ozone Jay – Ben Matthews

## Awakening

At the end of summer,  
she cut the bright pigmented floral  
in attempt to preserve the peace that  
tethered her flat feet all spring and  
summer to the wet earth  
overrun with crabgrass  
but the roads were salted in early  
November, at the first sight of snow.

She began to fight with strangers at night  
over parking spots on her urban  
one-way street.  
Large pickup trucks parked carelessly,  
occupying two potential spots,  
but she refused to use plastic patio chairs to  
reserve her space,  
it was too early, still fall.

The anthocyanin pigments in  
violets, daisies, hydrangeas,  
roses, and marigolds lost their  
bright yellow, purple, red, and blues  
in the thick black book she  
tucked away and they  
became colorless and brittle.

Waves of snow came for months  
but the violently bright floral remained a  
vivid explosion of petals and stems,  
as she remembered all the seeds she had saved  
and the cone flowers and the other perennials  
asleep in the soil,  
ready to wake  
come spring.

Deena November



The Edge of an Awakening –  
Stacey Pvdvinkowski

## After His Death, I Eat a Hotdog with Dad

My hands  
Rest on the cool surface of a grey, metal counter  
And thoughts of my father  
Roll into my mind like  
The little waves that crash on the beach outside that hotdog stand  
As I buy a snack that touches  
My childhood.  
On the boardwalk, the stores and food shops  
Stare out over the water  
Dad strolls down the wooden planks beside me  
Looking for a break from the afternoon sun  
He laughs  
And reaches in his pocket to pull out some change.  
While clouds dot the shiny blue sky  
Music and colors and summer smells  
He goes to a window to order the treat  
And I remember him  
Smiling.  
A little girl and a happy man with his daughter  
Both together on a sunny afternoon  
I close my eyes and I see us.  
The little girl is me, so many years ago  
The man is my dad.  
“Mary,” Dad chuckles.  
“Wanna hotdog?”  
A tired fast-food clerk prepares our cheap meal  
And I watch Dad’s big hands squirt some ketchup on my treasure  
The afternoon’s feast.  
I chew and gaze up at him on that day  
Staying close by so I don’t get lost  
And so content that he is there.  
Those summer days are  
Taken for granted  
Until they slip away and  
It is too late.  
Summer afternoons will never be the same.  
I want to run to that place where we ate  
To the same shop decorated with orange towels, dark-glasses and funny t-shirts  
I want to hold my dad’s hand  
And munch on my snack  
And listen to crackling radios play from the beach blankets  
Now, as I meander down that old, worn walkway again  
We are all together again in my dreams;  
I smile and recall those warm vacation days.  
I think of that afternoon  
And, even after his death  
I eat a hotdog with my father.

Wall – Ellen Chisdes Neuberg



## Commemorating

Such a pity you missed it,  
thought you ought to have seen it,

felt the raw emotions, souls converging to a singular path,  
desires, dreams, lingering memories, poured out through ink and oil,

coming together to perform miracles, each outstretched hand, linking with another,

we did it, because we did it together,  
reigniting the flame of community.

Kathryn Lynn Zapalo