Ekphrastic Poetry
with the Orenaug Chapter of the
Connecticut Poetry Society

Featuring the art of
Marc Chabot, Woodbury, Conn.

Imagining Sunflower 3000

By Sandy Carlson

Lifeblood is the ink of the artist's pen
Mapping the beats of imagination,
Abandoning straight roads to find heart truths,
Ever favoring fluent, curving lines
Of adventure, the soul off-leash, running.
You, standing on a rise, notice the sunflower
Noticing itself claiming sun power,
Roots like pulsing arteries, like work-strong
Hands, extending ever upward, oak thick,
Penetrating your dreams like a scalpel.
You feel these sun followers in your heart
Promising a new landscape, new blossoms
Coming up for air and light where they choose.
The power of light, in black and white, makes dreams your news.

Listen to Monk

(as sung by Carmen McCrae)

By Julie Cook

How to explain the deep pleasure
That rises in my belly
When the opening bass line jogs upward
Topped off by those three pointy piano chords.
Take a breath for the deep dive
As Carmen effortlessly rides the river
Of bass, piano, high hat
With her sublime, earthy voice.
“Thelonius can do that! Listen to this cat!” dat dat daa
She winds through an intricate terrain at pulse-quickening pace
—hairpin turns, loops, figure eights—
Then the piano flings its hip story against a jagged mountainside
Scaling it up and down,
Tosses it to the sax, who weaves it into a dark filigreed
forest. Then the bass, sotto voce, each note a ripe plucked
berry, retells all that has been said
In a way it has never been said before.
All the strands converge and
Oh baby, we’ve reached ultimate coherence,
Bring it home, Carmen—
“Some cats swing and others don’t, Don’t you be the kind that
won’t, Thelonius can do that! Listen to this cat!” dat dat daaaa

Pen and Ink and Pencil

By Steve Allison

Pen and ink and pencil
describe paths in a colorless world behind a pane of glass
where imagination runs free,
spreading rainbows over
leaves
  feathers
    toadstools
      and roots

Fairies and elves lurk in the shadows
of a swirling windy wildness
aflutter with wings
  and dancing legs

twirling arms
bagpipes and flutes
Colors and sounds run among arcs and lines
like children in a playground
inventing games never foreseen by the creators

What a gift, to craft fantastic worlds that transport us to higher dimensions... Paper

becomes earth, and water, and sky, and a web of life connecting it all together.

Adults carried magically backward to childhood

Imagining the Wanderer

By Sandy Carlson

A spirit gift of imagination
Doing soul work, responding to the world,

This drawing strips me down, bids me dive down.
I do. A protozoan pulsing through
A sea devoid of sunlight yet rich in life,
I am part of this holobiont–
Vast, eternal, ever deepening life
Force, soundlessly gracing the fields of time,
Omnidirectional. This narrative
Has no beginning, no ending, no voice
No audience, reviewers, critics,
Neither asking for nor inviting response.
How long can the soul, submerged, remain anonymous?
Distinct, alone, how thrives the soul in any of us?

Beyond the Border

By Julie Cook

On the charter from Niantic to Block Island
December sun glints off calm water.
The fishermen lean on the rail,
Watch the cloud-streaked sky,
Anticipate a bountiful catch.
Three hours in, a shift;
The wind changes from caress
To heaving punches, hurling against the tide.
The sea surface ripples into frosty snow
And then comes the first swell—
You can see it in the distance—
A humped sea creature heading right for the boat.
They drop anchor, bow facing the waves,
Ride her up up, up twelve feet to the top
Then roll all the way
Down down
To a stomach hollowing thump—
Over and over and over—
A carnival ride with no 'off' switch. The
fishermen lean their rods on the rail,
Balancing to stay on board,
Straining every muscle,
Working through nausea.
And the porgy, sea bass, cod
Seem to leap onto the hooks
As if eager to escape the maelstrom.
Hours later, crossing the Atlantic
Toward home port, the fishermen—
Spent, numb—
Watch the sun, low in a hazy sky,
Reflect on calm water.
This short trip has taken them
miles beyond their safe invisible border.
Part of the wall has crumbled.
They carry this awareness home with them.

On: Politics As Usual

(A pen and ink by Marc Chabot)
By Kelly FJ Wright

Twigs and leaves
And old, dead
Bones
Dry and brittle things;
Forgotten, discarded
Things
The Old Guard
Almost done now;
The chaos and discord
Nothing more
Than the final death throes
Of a tired,

Angry old man.

Imagining a Contained Landscape

By Sandy Carlson

Clouded in gray silence, Hades is lit
By the dim lights of tired souls resting
And wandering, awaiting errant guests
Who have sacrificed their way through the gates
Of the underworld, for a glimpse of the truth–
The last words of fallen heroes, mothers,
Blind prophets whose insights point the way home.
Souls wander, souls wait, and souls remember
Blue skies and freedom, family and small joys,
Triumphs marked with homecomings, spirit songs
Soaring to the clouds, their names remembered,
Places at the head of the table, honored.

If you knew Hades were inches below your feet,
Would you bear the pain of going there, your loved ones to greet?

Acknowledgements
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Thank you to the Woodbury Public Library for supporting ekphrastic poetry, poetry events, in general, and local authors.

What is ekphrastic poetry?
"Ekphrastic poetry has come to be defined as poems written about works of art; however, in ancient Greece, the term ekphrasis was applied to the skill of describing a thing with vivid detail… In addition to the descriptions of a work of art, an ekphrastic poem usually includes an exploration of how the speaker is impacted by his or her experience with the work."

Source:
https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/poetry_and_art/downloads/ekphrasis.pdf

Related Information
The Orenaug Chapter of the Connecticut Poetry Society hosts ekphrastic poetry workshops at the Woodbury Public Library at 1 p.m. on the first Saturday each month, and chapter meetings on the third Saturday. All are welcome.

Links

- Marc Chabot Fine Arts - www.mcfinearts.com
- The Connecticut Poetry Society - ctpoetry.net
- The Orenaug Chapter of the CPS - orenaugcps.blogspot.com
- Woodbury Public Library - woodburylibraryct.org

Contact Information
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