

The background is a rich, textured painting. It features a winding path in shades of red and orange that leads through a lush green landscape. In the foreground, two figures are walking away from the viewer; one is wearing a blue dress and a wide-brimmed hat, and the other is in a blue and red outfit. To the right, a dark, silhouetted figure of a person stands near a structure. A large, stylized tree with a trunk of blue and green and a canopy of yellow and orange hangs from the top right. The background is dominated by large, rounded hills in shades of purple, pink, and grey, set against a dark, deep blue sky.

ADULT

# Ekphrastic Writing

POETRY CONTEST 2020

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Ekphrastic writing, or writing about art, was created by the Greeks but popularized by the Romans. The goal of ekphrasis was to make the reader or listener envision a work of art as if it were physically present. Looking at art and describing art is central to being visually literate in our image-saturated world.

The Toledo Museum of Art hosts an annual Ekphrastic Poetry Contest, in which we invite visitors to submit an original poem inspired by a work of art in the TMA's collection. The following poems are the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Ekphrastic Poetry Contest submissions.

Please note that entries may discuss topics that are considered upsetting, disturbing, or offensive by some readers.



Arthur Hughes  
*Ophelia ("And He Will Not Come Back Again")*, about 1865  
Oil on canvas  
Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1952.87

Charity Anderson

## Our Last March

How do I forage the nature of our demise:  
Do bees beckon the fruit to become on boughs  
Or do they simply gather what they can  
Before coldness sets in  
And bestow faultless masterpieces  
As postscripts to their beloved blossoms

Amy Ballard

## FIND ME

Vacant rooms on vacant floors  
deserted windows, darkened doors  
courtyard in shadow all times of day  
shell of a hermit crab moved away

This will be me when he is gone  
until I can turn the power on  
and find some furnishings of my own  
like the ones he said I'd outgrown

Find some tapestries, sculpture,  
glass open the window, let the breeze pass  
plant geraniums, paint the door  
You'll find me sunny, myself once more



Vilhelm Hammershøi  
*Interior of Courtyard*, 1899  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of The Georgia Welles Apollo Society, 2000.30

Janice Bethany

## On a Gray Scale

Inside the museum is a portrait  
of a man. You notice his tailored coat,  
vest, neck cloth elaborately looped,

his look of mild restlessness caused perhaps  
by sitting so still with life calling beyond  
the backdrop. The manuscript prop is

a sign of his literacy, and the man  
surely apprenticed and achieved, earning  
the means for this portrait, a mark of status.

You study his reserved, reflective gaze,  
finding quiet visions in his smile.  
He appears to be a fair man; if he

were a barrister, his searching eyes say  
he would weigh both sides of your premise.  
His lean physique implies temperance.

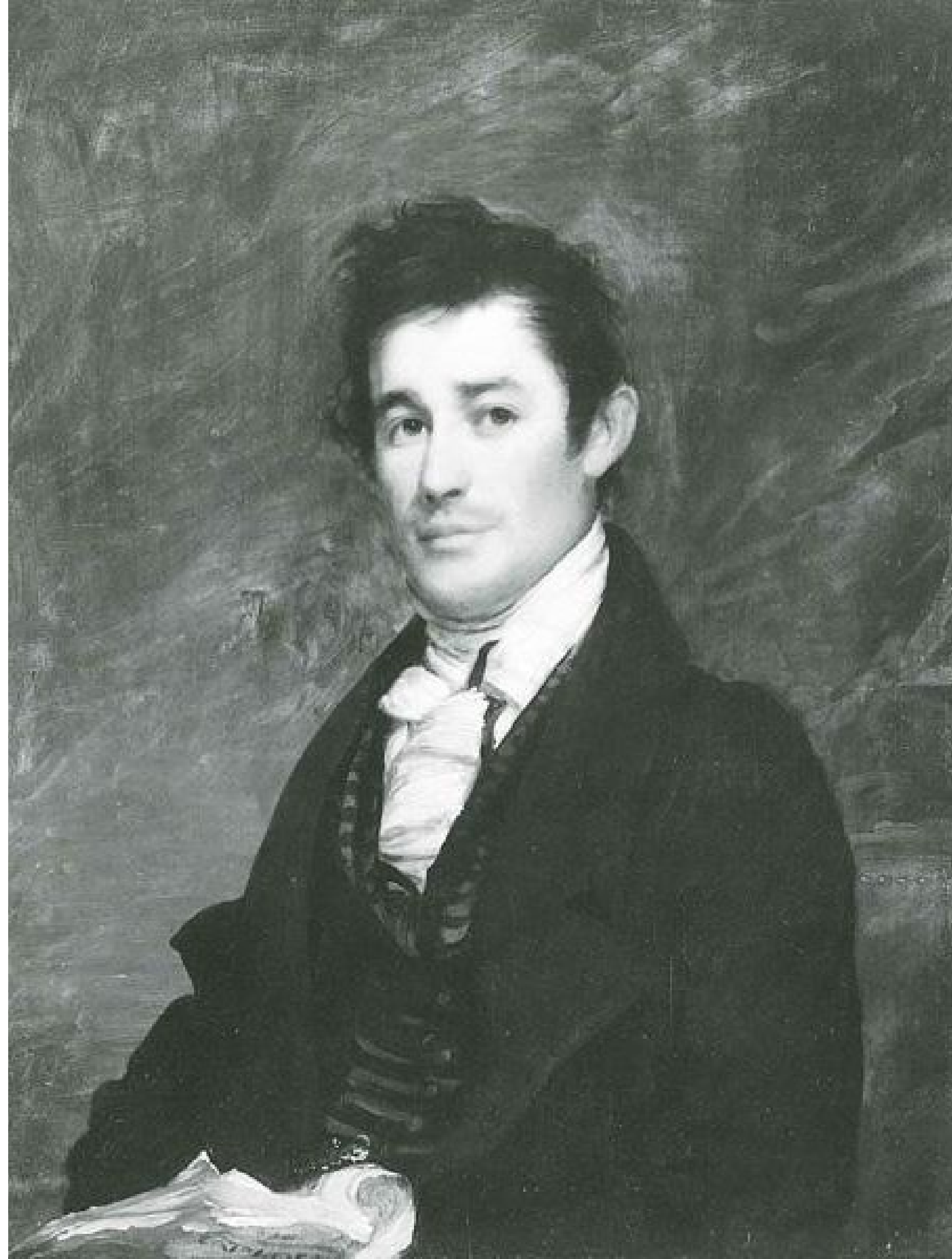
The slight erosion of hairline speaks  
to past and coming years. Painting the man's  
thick hair, the artist may have brought out

resistant strokes in both their natures  
but not at either's expense. This man was  
somebody. A choice was made to

portray him modestly, in black and white  
oil on panel, leaving you with the man's  
understated place on a gray scale.

Samuel Lovett Waldo  
*Portrait of a Man*, about 1829-1830  
Oil on panel

Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Bequest in Memory of her Father, Maurice A. Scott, 1954.31





Ejagham people, Ekoi subgroup  
Crest Helmet, early 20th century  
Wood, antelope (duiker) skin, palm fiber, bamboo, metal studs, kaolin, and pigment  
Purchased with funds given by Dorothy Mackenzie Price, 2005.321

Adele Dahlin

## Gossip Hell

O two-faced gossip,  
wear the spiraling helmet and your dual punishment,  
tattooed like ringworm boring  
into your surprised skins.  
With one face you must hear like a man,  
with the other, listen like a woman,  
weeping forever at what he said, she said.  
Labyrinthine language tightens  
in whining coils, one torturing each ear.  
Soft whispers carry sharp messages,  
martial throwing stars that carve  
your conscious, your conscience.  
Listen painfully and you must eternally,  
your neck cords straining at attention;  
lips part, nostrils flare, eyes round:  
What have you heard? What do you hear?  
Fiery news singses your brain,  
steams from every orifice and  
armless, you can never loosen this hell-helmet.  
Its leather leash braided into your elaborate necklace  
binds you to the iron block  
where you relentlessly, endlessly  
listen,  
listen.



Pablo Picasso  
*Woman with a Crow*, 1904  
Charcoal, watercolor, and gouache on paper, mounted on pressboard  
Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1936.4

Kelly Eckel

## Distinguishable Revulsion

Who controls the eyes I see in the mirror?  
It is me, I blur your vision to withhold the truth  
What is the purpose of your torture?  
To purge your dreams with unrealistic expectations  
How do you keep my loathing so fierce?  
I tell you that you are nothing  
Why would you wish me harm?  
Because I am you

Sharon Fish Mooney

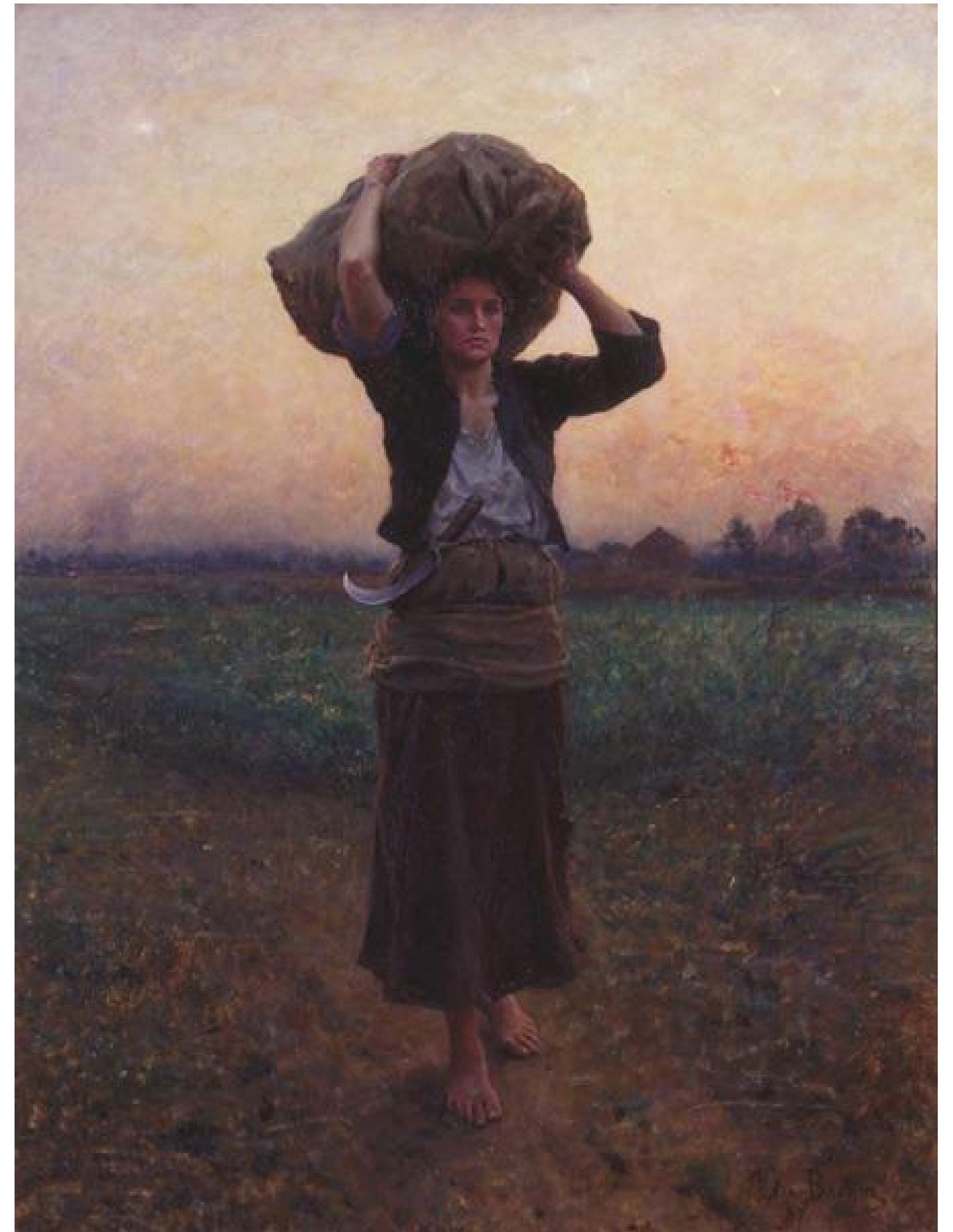
## The Shepherd's Star

Capella rises, dusk replaces day;  
the shepherd's star now guides the goats that roam.  
It's a sign that pierces clouds and lights the way  
of a weary peasant woman bound for home.

Barefoot, she treads the dusty well-worn path.  
Around her waist a silver sickle's tied  
to cut down brambles, briars and long grass  
that grows prolific in the countryside.

She's gathered new potatoes in the field;  
they fill a hessian bag she's holding high,  
while in the distance Angelus bells peal,  
reminder of a son who came to die.

At home she'll rest; her day of work is done.  
She'll rise again, at dawn, to greet the sun.



Jules Breton  
*The Shepherd's Star*, 1887  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of Arthur J. Secor, 1922.41



Sarah Fisher

## Unreachable

Each square a shadow of someone who attended this table,  
The visage of a soul no longer present,  
Each section its own story woven into a room now unattended.  
Huge and dark at first, yet so bright within its intricate depths.  
Nothing left to feed us but expectation.  
I desperately want to tear it from the wall, to breathe the smell of distant fabric into my lungs,  
To feed the texture to my brain with my fingertips, holding the seams and memorizing them.  
I walk away with clenched fists, fighting my own breath.  
The feast gone, deliciousness devoured,  
An empty table left alone stabs at my soul over and over again.  
I return for more, repeatedly standing in its beautiful emptiness.  
I am bound with the questions of a vastness unanswered, clinging only to the hope of  
something later,  
A calm white cloth screaming out its need for more.  
My heart is on this wall.

Aleksandra (Sasha) Stoyanov  
*Silence*, 2006  
Wool, sisal, silk, cotton threads

Purchased with funds given by Georgia Welles Apollo Society members Joseph V. and Judith M. Conda, Bill and Pam Davis, Louise and Greg Gregory, Ann W. Hartmann, Eileen Kennedy and Robert Heim, Jeffery and Inge Klopping, and Mrs. Philip G. Simonds, with additional support from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 2019.62



Walter Glasshouse  
**The Door to Infinity**

Infinite, serene, the endless expanse suggests divinity incarnate  
In a glance, perception morphs with every subtle change in iris angle  
Lights that radiate inside like the songs of vibrant angels  
Solace to her mind, polka dots in time... Quell the anxious mutterings with details pointed fine  
Thank you for the stillness... The mirrored silhouettes rebuild us  
Thank you for the fire that flies softly from your soul  
Thank you for the water that you've offered down below  
Unafraid to see forever, you travel outside boundaries of dimension  
You peer into our consciousness, revealing all intention



Yayoi Kusama  
*Fireflies on the Water*, 2002  
Mirrors, plexiglass, lights, and water  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Postwar Committee and the Contemporary Painting and Sculpture Committee and partial gift of Betsy Wittenborn Miller 2003.322. Photograph by Sheldon C. Collins



George Tooker  
*Meadow I*, 2005  
Egg tempera on gesso panel

Gift of the Woodward Foundation and purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, by exchange, 2007.47

Eric Hehl

## Have I?

You came here to find rest. And now so have I.  
This grass, yellowed, in the late season,  
is withered.

Once, it stained the feet of my childhood,  
green with life, running in a spring breeze,  
reveling in a summer to come.

We found our color here, a dazzling ballet  
of wildflowers and contentment.

All too quickly  
I let that verdant dance wash over me  
while I chased death, and took you with me.

I desired more, and so many long hours  
I offered to the Insatiable  
so I could give us what you already had.

All the while like these trees  
offering their shade in the autumn sun  
you waited.

I did not know more could become less  
until the cold breeze of winter's grasp  
ripped you away.

Now these leafless trees that once sang are silent.  
After a season, you found what you wanted.  
After too many, so have I.

Melissa Helton

## Pandemic

Girl. I feel ya. Hands and feet half way toward movement, to hopping off that perch, but stalled. It's a pandemic and we're still in

the graph's upswell. The galleries are empty, the libraries and restaurants. Graduations and weddings canceled. I know you're worried

about your sick sister and your old, old mom, the kids at home turning feral, the scary, scary news. I see your big head filled with all

those thoughts, your eyes cast toward the floor under the weight, your body 100% inertia. I understand, darling. Let's share this

moment on the livestream because it's all we can do. Because love, right now, is an empty building. Love, right now, means staying away.

Kiki Smith  
*Seated Nude*, 2005  
Bronze with silver nitrate patina on painted wood base  
Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Bequest in Memory of her Father, Maurice A. Scott, 2018.18



Lydia Horvath

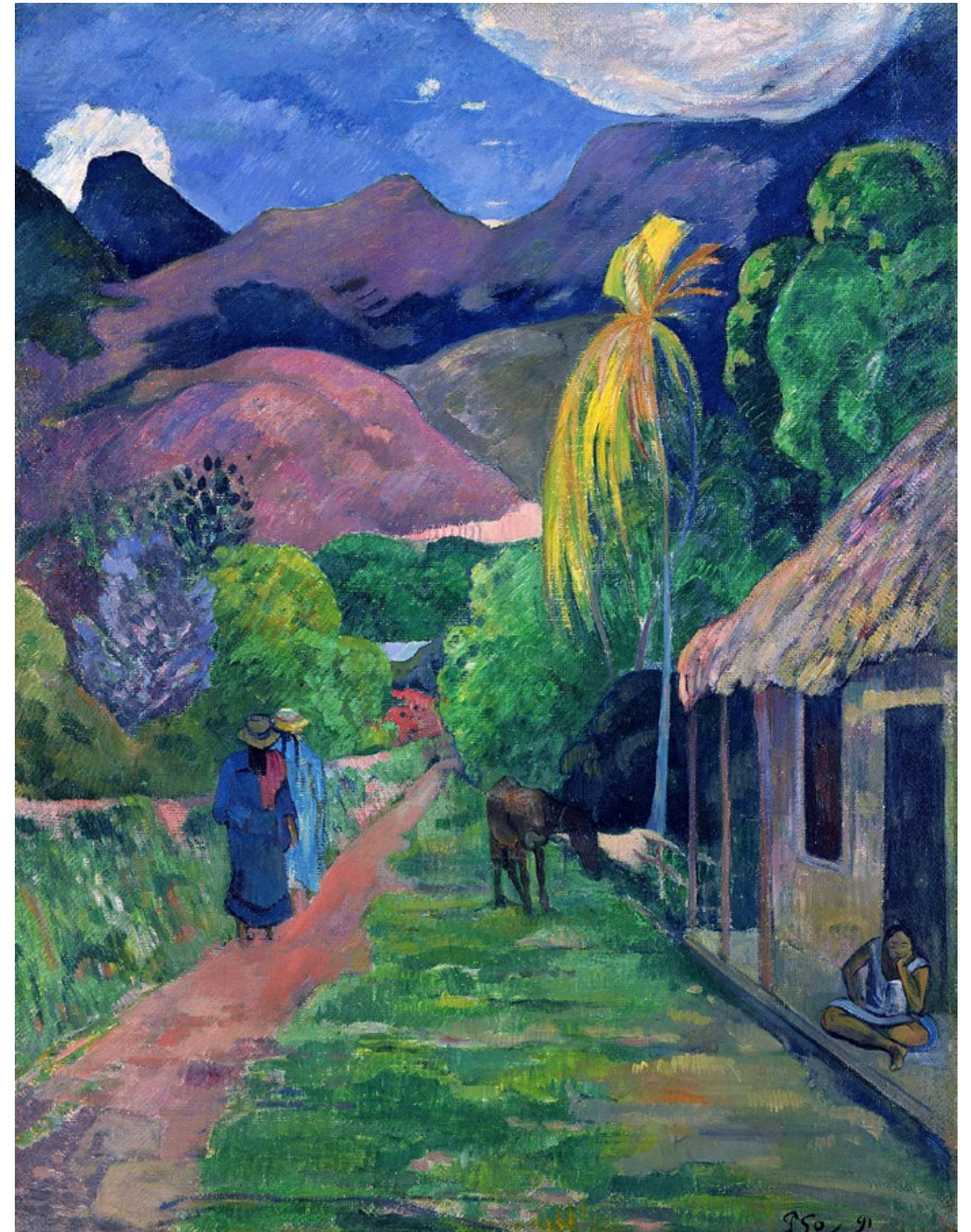
## Woman: Vahine

How I came to be  
faceless, a counterbalance  
and how I was included  
by that man  
in the same way as  
a beast of burden, a tree  
important only as  
acquisition, composition –  
my real meaning  
forgotten, left out,  
or worse –  
    twisted into  
    something alien

How it was that I  
sat for him,  
talked for him, even  
    Allowed him –

So exotic to each other  
it seemed enough, at first –  
but with  
decision, volition  
all out of balance –  
    only him with a face,  
    choosing the time,  
    the place

How the day drew on  
with warning, an omen  
a sign of thunder but  
no rumble  
showing the spirits' imbalance  
my sisters seeing, but  
passing us by  
    Better to leave it be  
    and forget,  
I heard them thinking,  
heads bowed,  
mouths silent,  
knowing what was coming



Paul Gauguin  
*Street in Tahiti*, 1891  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1939.82



Richard Bosman  
*11:05 to Chicago*, 1983  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John T. Chiles, 1989.116

Jacob Kempf

## And I Approach the Weapon

I don't know  
what it was  
that woke me that grey dawn.  
Did I even hear something,  
or was it my imagination:  
The porter? Slack? Steel wheels on steel rails?  
Footsteps quickening in the hallway  
thrust me to my roomette door,  
a figure emerges from the darkness,  
stocky and cumbersome, it moves toward me.  
I duck out of sight as the hunchback passes.  
Seconds to minutes and I'm in the empty hall,  
a glint lowers my gaze downward  
and I approach the weapon  
as a beast stalking its prey.  
A quick sweep and the machine is gone,  
snatched under my skin for a short time.  
I disappear again into the roomette,  
my free hand opens the latch, humidity entering.  
Soon, I feel much lighter, freer, calmer.  
The humidity is gone and I'm at ease again  
not even thinking twice as the quickening wheels  
lull me back into my sleep.

Matt Kizaur

## What They Say In Aberdeen

*An Elegy for Janet Crane Barley*

Only kindred souls truly knew the misty-mystery blue of you.  
Braemar's breathing shuddered upon your leaving, our full hearts cleaving  
Trees and mountains upon sky, the closing of your eyes, lost among the waters of why  
A tapestry wrended, our circle-thoughts ended, the tatters of matters pretended:

Will-o'-the-Wisps' soft-kiss whispers and scriptures of missing her.  
What they say in Aberdeen, about this once-girl who came to glean  
Stories of Finn, the one and only, and ale offerings to the Seonaidh  
Bespoke herbridean promises and honor-bound Culloden marches  
She wove threaded words for clan and kin, winding ways there and back again  
Blessing Sir John's Aigas Hides, rolling tales of lochs and downs and tides  
The Framer's cloud-piercing light, and sacred-lantern incants' night  
The sleepy heads of sullen maids, spitting kelpie curses on their graves.

She kept them all in painted prose, pleating stories each Highlander knows.  
Hold fast the lonely hunter and fairy-glow Cú, the magic salmon in spring-river new  
And walk among the clouded moors, through heather fields and oaken doors  
To feel sprite-moments of her loving heart, banishing achy doubt as each depart.



Gustave Doré  
*The Scottish Highlands*, 1875  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of Arthur J. Secor, 1922.108

Lisa Kokoski

## Rock Solid

Water and earth

Potash feldspar, quartz, plagioclase, biotite, and hornblende

Points, lines, angles, surfaces

Euclid and Burton

Perimeter =  $2(a + b)$

Area = Base x Height

He rolls his red walker off road and makes a beeline to one of the legless chairs,  
Connects some black flecks with his index finger, locks the hand brakes, and lands hard on the  
polished seat.

The stacked parallelograms are joined at the hip.

I sit sideways on the mate, lean into the angled back, and fold my left arm on the warm shelf  
beside me.

He won't hear me unless I aim for his right ear.

"Boy, this is living," he says as he pulls a few Hershey's miniatures from his pressed shirt  
pocket.

We divide them even-stein and share the water I carried in my pack.

He looks at the tree and we try to guess its age. We wonder how far its roots stretch.

He marvels at the aimless grain of our granite chairs. I have seen it before in a state capitol.

We can't decide if the chairs were permanently placed by man, men, or crane.

He tells me again how much he loves rocks

And then scans the sky for birds.

I hear him softly sing *Amazing Grace*, but it is

How Great Thou Art that comes to mind.



Scott Burton  
*Pair of Parallelogram Chairs*, 1987  
Polished Balmoral granite  
Gift of Georgia and David K. Welles, 2003.50A-B

Jacinta Krecek

## Sonnet: To the Swallows

Within our campus, spring's sure sign arrives  
Appointed day when feathered friends return  
O'er causeway gracing skies with swooping dives  
At last appears glad sight for which I yearn.

Admire their fork-tailed royal coats of blue  
Take note: an open beak's sweet chitt'ring ways  
Arise high soaring, drop and glide on cue  
And water-skim 'mid sun's bright glitt'ring rays.

But those who trod on by all miss the show  
With lowered heads hunched over screens they stare  
While circled flights crisscross above and low  
Air acrobats performing feats so rare.

If I but stop and watch a moment here  
Perhaps you too may share this joy so dear.



Nankoku Osawa  
*Bevy of Flying Birds*, Restoration Period (1868-1912)  
Watercolor  
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1912.628





Frank O'Hara  
*Fairfield Porter, 1957*  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1977.31

Leonard Kress

## Frank O'Hara Undisplayed (in the Closet)

I visit my favorite museum  
wanting to pay a visit  
to Frank O'Hara.  
It's been a while since I've seen him--  
half-reclining on the couch  
with the Bonnard slipcover he never picked out  
his elbow slumped into a cushion  
right arm draped across abdomen,  
bare legs spread and toes curled.  
He's so comfortable, there's plenty of room  
I'm sure he'll invite me in  
offer me a soft drink, drop the new  
Bud Powell on the turntable  
(his friend Fairfield Porter  
out back cleaning his brushes)  
He knows I'll stay silent and listen  
as he laments Lana Turner's collapse  
and Billie Holiday's demise.  
I promise not to overstay my welcome  
to keep my outright sadness  
over his impending death  
and his absence from these gallery walls  
to myself.

Timothy Langhorst

## Silence<sup>1</sup>

Enter in to it.  
A serene, intimate solitude.  
Light creating suggestions of permanence.

Like atmospheric music, a melisma of dust motes,  
Notes, subdued piano, electronic drone, violin,  
drifting, scattered, forming.

It envelopes you  
Revealing a place  
That remembers and forgets.

Transitory light  
like wool of the Avassi sheep, spun yarn, dyed in natural shades,  
Hushed, monochromatic hues,  
A resonant rainbow of grey, brown, black on patterned, textured wall.

A simple table,  
Offset, bearing no weight,  
Rests on an inarticulate horizon between floor and wall;  
an unadorned white cloth, purposefully draped over the table  
waiting for the magician to snatch the material away  
revealing a secret.

This modest space  
like the possibilities of an open-ended question  
speaks and sings, soundlessly musical.  
Threads of life and death, chaos and certainty.  
Connecting and disconnected.  
Nodédet beyn ór uveyn ófel<sup>2</sup>.  
Moving between light and darkness.



Aleksandra (Sasha) Stoyanov  
*Silence*, 2006  
Wool, sisal, silk, cotton threads

Purchased with funds given by Georgia Welles Apollo Society members Joseph V. and Judith M. Conda, Bill and Pam Davis, Louise and Greg Gregory, Ann W. Hartmann, Eileen Kennedy and Robert Heim, Jeffery and Inge Klopping, and Mrs. Philip G. Simonds, with additional support from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 2019.62

<sup>1</sup> Recommend that this be read while listening to *Into Silence I* by Jane Antonia Cornish, from the album, *Into Silence*

<sup>2</sup> *Nodédet beyn ór uveyn ófel* (Moving between light and darkness) from *Five Hebrew Love Songs*, by Eric Whitacre, lyrics by Hila Plitmann.

David Lymanstall

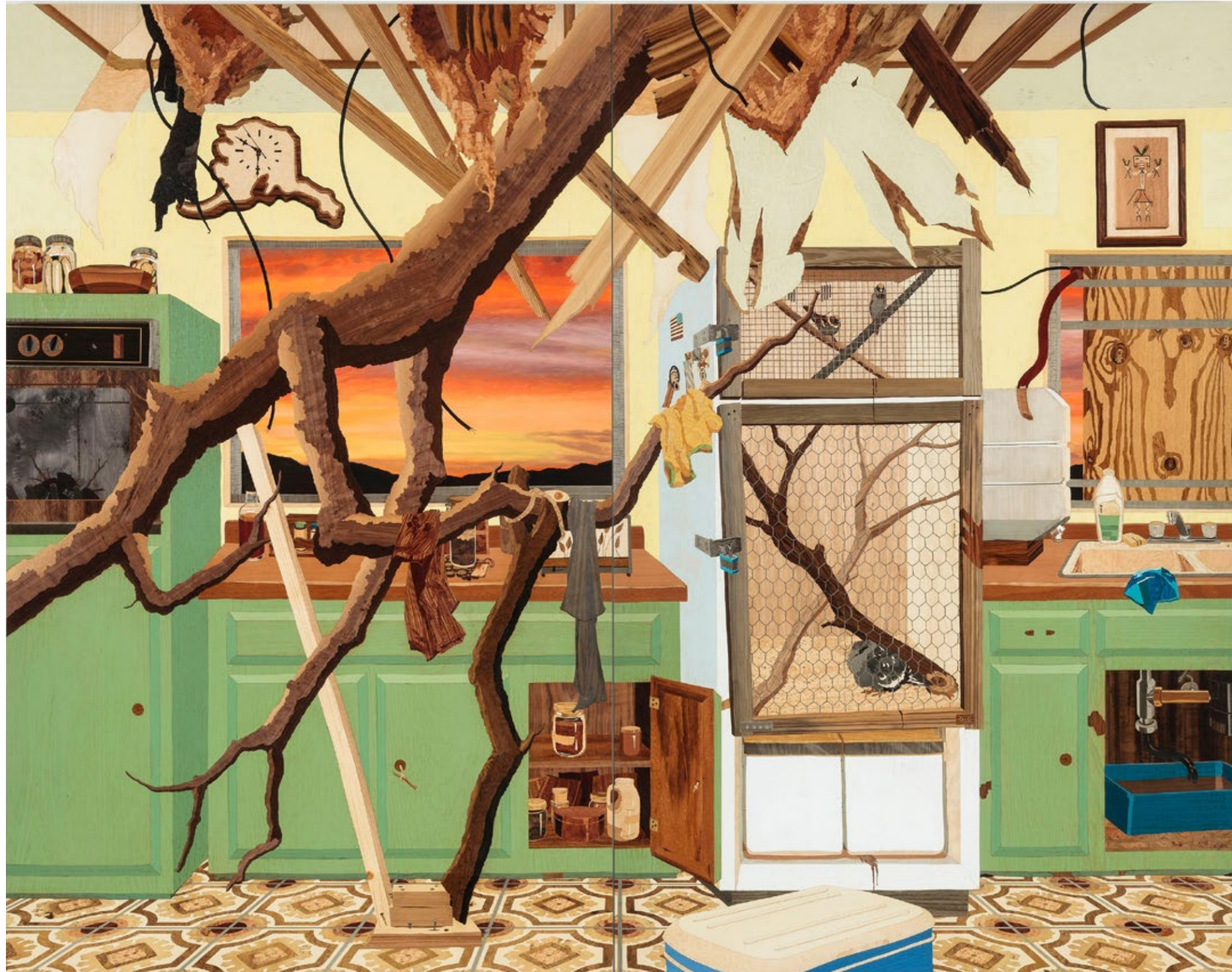
## Praise Light

I rise each day  
Before dawn,  
When the blackness of night  
Envelopes the  
Determined light of morning,  
To witness  
The transition, the birthing  
Of a new day.  
To see  
The magic of light  
Refract from  
The feather of a bird,  
Restoring the glory  
To pigments of every shade,  
As they appear to say, "good day"  
To the fading night.



Melchior d'Hondecoeter  
*Poultry in a Landscape*, 1600s  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1949.102



Amanda McGuire

## Modern Marquetry

Above the single wall oven, a fresh jar of pickled cukes.  
And out the picture window, a sunset so red it's atomic.

Where plywood and insulation have fallen so has a tree,  
its limbs a clothesline: a yellow tee with baby doll sleeves,

green trim, and a bow at the center of its collar. There are  
hints of beauty here—framed indigenous art, unblemished,

wheat shellac on the vintage toaster—among this disaster.  
Slow down, my love. Look carefully. What was once the fridge

now a bird cage, chicken wire and padlocks. By the sink,  
a tube for rainwater, harvested in a clear plastic dispenser.

String and twig hardware on the cabinet, closed. In the open,  
glass jars with naked labels, a metal tin that once held cookies.

Have you noticed, dearest? It's us, living this, in our own home,  
and we are barely surviving, even though the linoleum is in tact.

Alison Elizabeth Taylor  
*Kitchen*, 2014  
Wood veneer, oil, acrylic and shellac  
Purchased with funds given in memory of Larry Thompson by his children and grandchildren, 2014.22



Vincent van Gogh  
*Houses at Auvers*, 1890  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1935.5

Gary Momenee

## So Much Color and Well-Being in the Air

Who needs a sky with a roof so blue?  
Strokes of wind bruise the upper air  
And whip the greenery into spiral waves  
But can't perturb the white façade.

The house sprawls with a natural ease  
And huddles close by its neighbors.  
It gathers the countryside around its door  
And the land returns a hard embrace.

The rambling stone wall beside the road  
Seems sprung complete from the sloping ground.  
Behind it a garden is tossed in bloom  
And in front, red poppies clamor in the grass.

A fitting habitation, thinks the summer guest,  
As perfect in its purpose as a robin's nest.

James J. Momenee

## The Reaper

The reaper toils at harvesting souls in the spirit of Millet,  
Beneath the “Good God Sun” on an Auvers’ summer’s day

Vibrant yellow sheaves of wheat flood the fields with golden light,  
Tassels of grain swirl and sway from the mistral’s menacing might

A cumulus cloud floats slowly over the frenzy down below,  
Casting it’s shadow provides fleeting relief from July’s fiery glow

Wielding his sickle he slashes the stalks at a constant steady pace,  
Wearing his wide brim straw hat that shades his weathered face

Ghostly bound stacks of wheat line up to receive the eternal promise,  
God’s grace is bestowed upon the disciple for a blessed and bountiful harvest



Vincent van Gogh  
*Wheat Fields with Reaper, Auvers*, 1890  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1935.4

Lylanne Musselman

## Winged Impressions

*to Laurits Andersen Ring's Rooks in a Field*

As soon as my eyes land on the painting, *Rooks in a Field*, I recall that small packet of cards in my grandma's upstairs drawer, Rook. A game I never got to play as an only child. Yet, I loved that picture: A Rook's silhouette on the deck. I marvel at how much Rooks look like crows. Crows always fascinate me, they're no "bird brains," they make their own tools, they take on complicated tasks, they recognize human faces, they play pranks. It is odd a group of them are called a murder. Perhaps that's where Hitchcock got his idea for using them in his thriller, *The Birds*. A movie that instilled fear of these creatures for years in so many. I admit these birds look ominous when flying in a flock overhead or looking to land – perhaps searching for food, a respite from a long flight. Or are these birds I'm looking at carrying an omen – that these coughs in the gallery are the precursor for a coming pandemic, where unlucky humans stay stationary and solitary, while Rooks (and crows) in fields still flock and are free to come and go.



Laurits Andersen Ring  
*Rooks in a Field*, 1891  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Bequest in Memory of her Father,  
Maurice A. Scott and with funds given in memory of Sarnoff A. Mednick, 2016.13

Sarah Ray

## The American's Dream

Columns sprout like trees  
from the earth. Gold leaf  
capitals adorn the skyline.  
The muses arrive on the breeze  
shaping and sculpting this motif  
of high society shine.

From my balcony I see  
a fantasia to false gods,  
built on slave labor suffering.  
We are not free!  
The man on the pedestal nods,  
and demands our offering.

One day the river will rise!  
The marble will erode!  
That is all to which I aspire,  
here in a nation built on lies.  
Horrors of his generation, to us bestowed!  
Nevertheless, burning bright, there is a fire.



Thomas Cole  
*The Architect's Dream*, 1840  
Oil on canvas

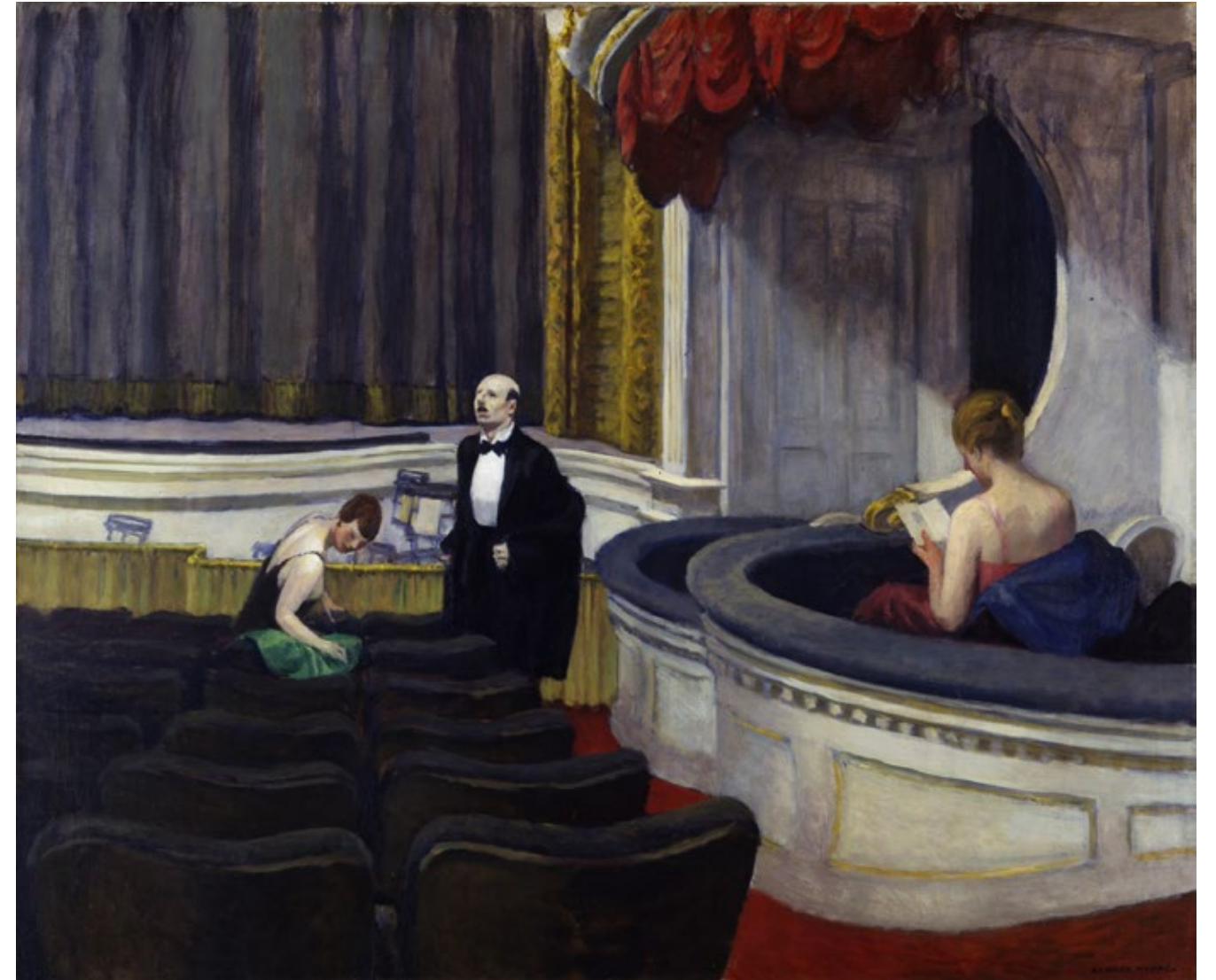
Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Bequest  
in Memory of her Father, Maurice A. Scott, 1949.162



Kelly Rose

## On “Two on the Aisle”

The dinner hadn't gone as planned, but now they were here  
She had put on the dress, beads and lace, an intricate show  
And now, the fear  
A pearl earring lost, rolling beneath the velvet row  
Of seats, empty now, as he stood waiting, unable to see or hear  
She was ready to leave, but could not go  
And now the lights were down, heavy curtains, slowly skimming the floor  
The beginning of the show  
She breathed in and smelled the fog of make-believe, burgundy lips, wanting more



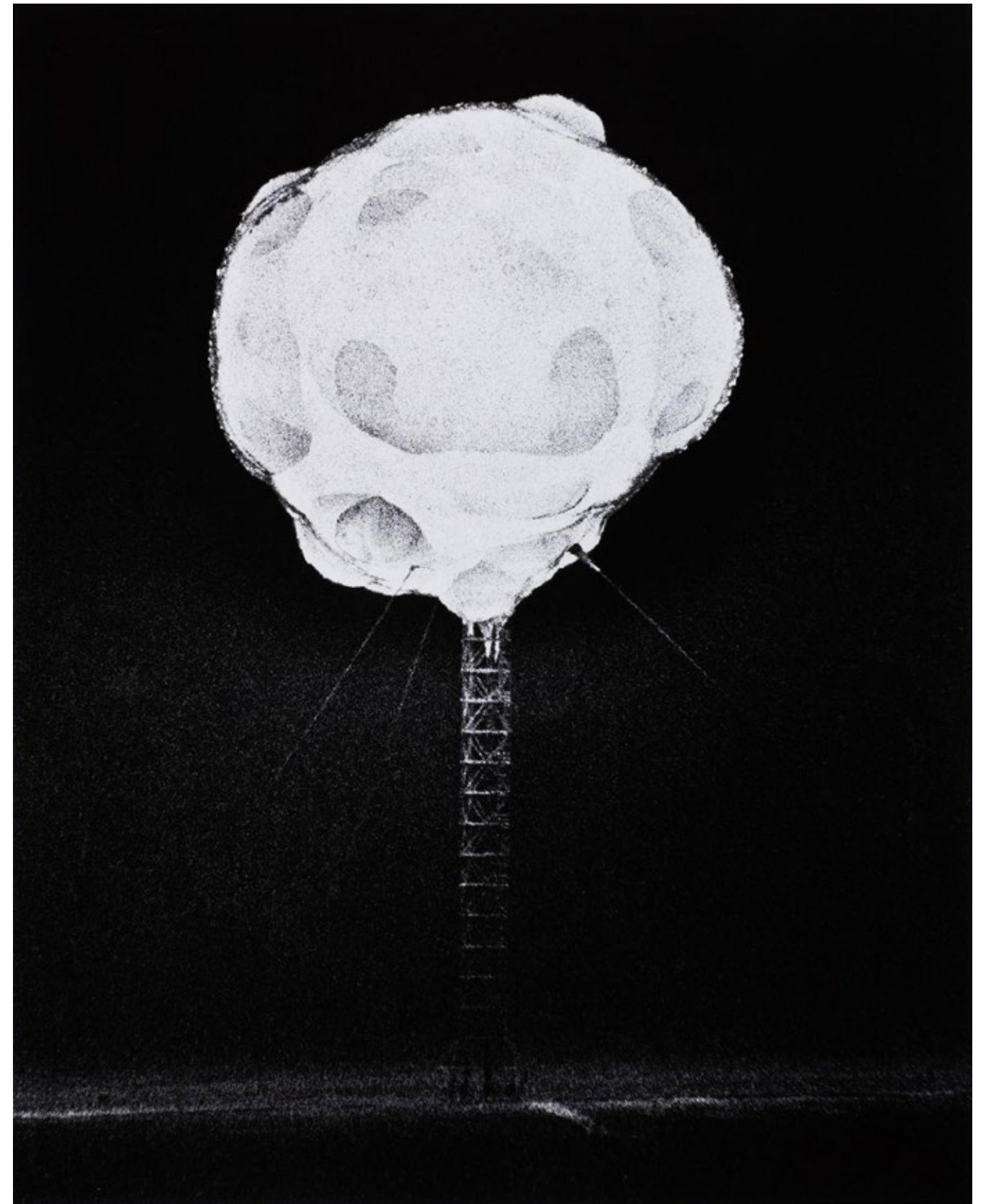
Edward Hopper  
*Two on the Aisle*, 1921  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1935.49

Kelly Rothgeb

## Glory of the Cherry Blossom

Look up at the stream of lights and blasts  
How they glisten and mock the cries of the innocent  
Children screaming and begging for mercy  
Fire immerses their dreams forgotten  
Washington gloats in their glory  
Another win they say  
They do not feel the despair and loss  
The millions of dollars falling from the cherry blossoms blur their vision

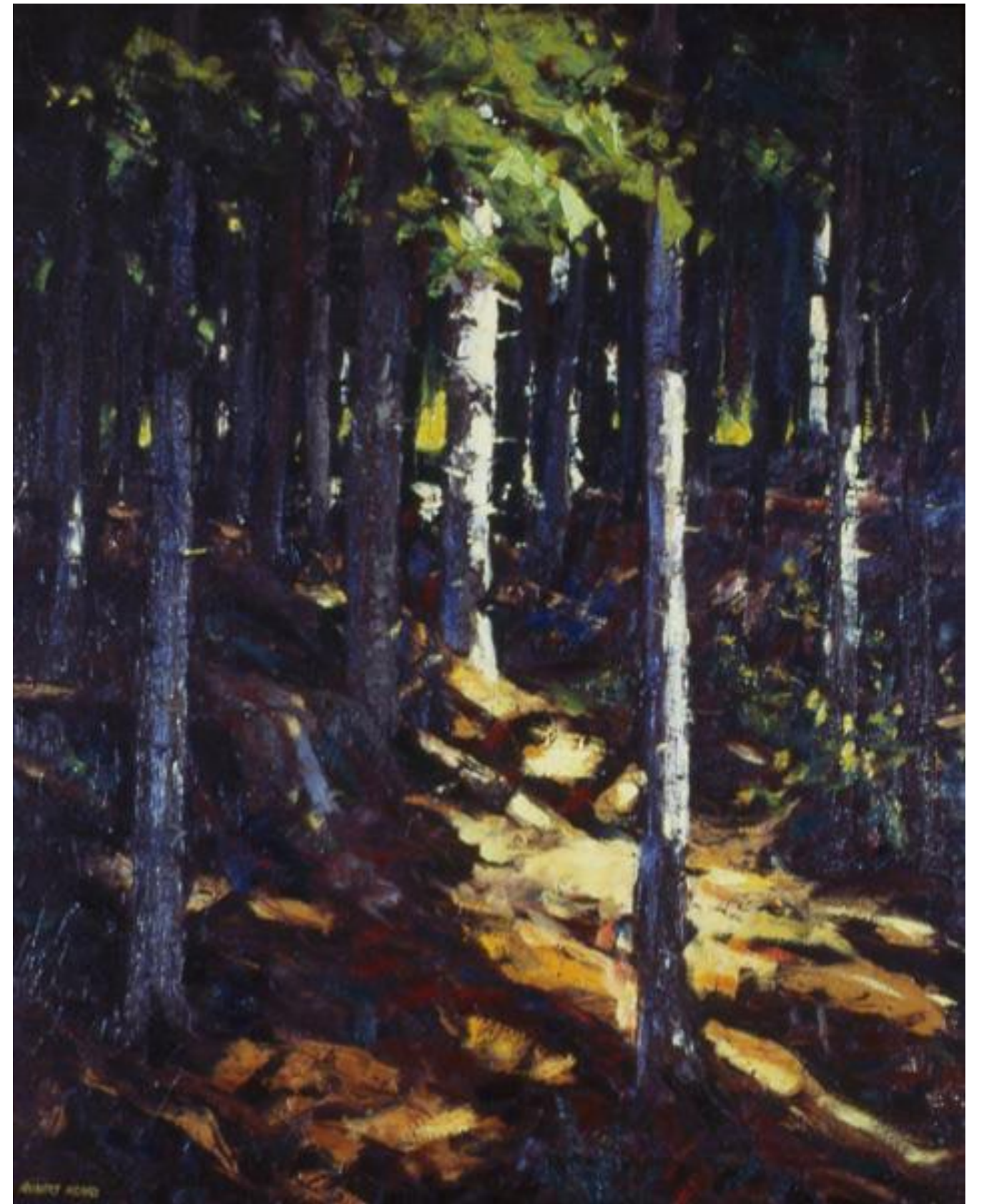


Harold Edgerton  
*Atomic Bomb Explosion before 1952, before 1952*  
Gelatin-silver print  
Gift of the Harold and Esther Edgerton Family Foundation, 1996.38

Kathryn Sadakierski

## Poetry of the Soul

Light in lace patterns,  
Creating shadow chiaroscuros among the trees,  
Like how the sun shines through stained glass,  
Casting mosaics onto the forest floor  
In kaleidoscopic shapes,  
Stars fallen to Earth,  
Prismatic meteors.  
Taller than Gothic towers,  
The trees instill quiet and peace,  
Breathing life into your spirit  
Amid the stillness of the woods,  
Your feet upon the dirt,  
Entwined with your roots,  
Telling you your truth  
Like sermons in a cathedral would do.



Robert Henri  
*Cathedral Woods, Monhegan Island, 1911*  
Oil on canvas  
Frederick B. and Kate L. Shoemaker Fund, 1919.47



Gina Sares

## This Is Our Reclamation

My mother sinks bulbs into soil  
and their sprouting is her first full breath.  
Her lungs expand with the garden's rising  
and by summer the sky is hers to inhale.  
She brings me fragrant clippings.  
This is heritage:  
The extension of self through creation  
and the sharing of it, as if to say,  
*I am worthy of space.*  
*And so are you.*  
So I take up the pen.  
The words form like birds at bath,  
lifting and swooping, warbling joy  
and heartbreak. There is beauty even  
in their making—the turn of my wrist, the pause  
of my hand, the rhythm of rooting thumbprint  
onto paper. This writing is a charting.  
*I, too, have walked.*  
*I, too, have story.*  
This is how I become, like so many women,  
the rain clearing its throat after drought.  
Each stroke a drop reclaiming land.  
I open in splashes, silver arms  
raised in victory.

Chunghi Choo  
Vase, 1986  
Electroformed copper, silver plate  
Gift of The Georgia Welles Apollo Society, 1996.10



Andrew Newell Wyeth  
*The Hunter*, 1943  
Tempera on masonite  
Elizabeth C. Mau Bequest Fund, 1946.25

Michael Schulz

## It's Time To Move On

We perch inside the limbs and freeze  
with fear. We see *The Hunter*, watch the peeling bark,

the falling leaves. Beyond the hills, the cattle eat the skin  
from fallen trees. The grass has turned to dust.

The tanbark used to line the floors of circus tents,  
the pieces broken up on racetracks, crushed

beneath the hooves. We want to fly away and find a pond,  
where tannins leach and turn the water brown like tea.

We want to drink the wine inside the cooper's barrel,  
after years of shaping hundred year old trees.

We never knew a buttonwood is just a sycamore,  
or that it's used to make the smokeless coal that burns

inside *The Hunter's* stove. We feel the cold.  
The wind is pushing us to chase the sun.

We want to leave, but know, with just a look,  
to wait until the shots are fired, before we burst into the sky.



Judi Selden

## Caged Bird

Just look at you,  
feathered, coiffed, corseted, chokered, muffed,  
shod - no peek of delicate ankle bone,  
a caged pretty bird! Contained!

Will you lift your heavy skirts above your ankle to flee from your perch  
step

by step

by step

into the square where sculptures of men and might reign?

Your eyes hint maybe.

Yet, you may not walk about London alone!

You've no means to support!

You must temper your intelligence!

Your place is in the home!

You've no right to vote!

Rigid mores forbid your flight!

Before sleep, your body deliciously freed from its pretty-bird couture,  
luxuriates,

as you loosen your pinned chestnut hair.

Running your bared hands through it,

you contain your hair in a braid.

Slipping into your nightdress, you cover your body once more.

In darkness, when his wiry, ruddy beard rasps your softness,  
the cage door - open for only a whisper - closes.

James Tissot  
*London Visitors*, about 1874  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1951.409



Giorgio de Chirico  
*Self-Portrait*, about 1922  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1930.204

Susan Spencer

## Instagram Man

Hey you  
Yes you, you Instagram man  
I see the way you look at me  
Through beady eyes and voluptuous chin  
Stop looking, please  
You say I am yellow and short, my eyes stay open in the middle of the night  
I am not, so I pull the skin off my fingers, just the rough parts  
I pray you stop, please  
And now I eat too much, and too little  
I go get bulb cancer, I rock back and forth on the bus  
How about now, Instagram man?  
Still rocking  
You look funny, we laugh, eyes leaking  
But there is no we  
And there is no you  
You are me



Edward Hopper  
*Two on the Aisle*, 1921  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1935.49

George Stamos

## Melancholy Serenade

Another night  
Of classical music  
Before me,  
To bore me.  
The struggle for  
Eyes to stay open.  
My chin bouncing,  
Snapping back,  
The precise jab  
Of the Steinway keyboard  
Making my head  
A speed bag.  
And she,  
Of the private box,  
Takes no notice of me.  
Her coat is being checked  
By a man in tails  
And perhaps,  
After the performance,  
He will drink champagne  
From her slipper,  
While I take  
My toast and tea  
In the study,  
And let Proust put me  
In the catbird seat.



Kerry Trautman

## Withholding

Rothko's planes of layered pigments barely press toward each other like teenaged thighs—inadvertently but controlled, aligning in football bleachers. Like china cabinet wine glasses hovering, not clinking together at footsteps.

My son taps his phone. My onions simmer on the stovetop. I don't ask if he's ever kissed a girl or boy. I can't remember for him the first time he gasped and screamed in sterile hospital air. I can't press his chest against another to ignite sparks.

Some pigments were never intended to blend, or would bleed so fully they would transform. He thinks he knows the risk in transformation. It's as if Rothko knew I could never say everything, knew that my son would never boil over, that I can't remember for him the moment he decided to lean away, and I can't instead unsteady his balance into me. Sometimes two beings are bridged only by air carrying the scent of browning butter. Some bodies coexist, appreciating, simmering from safe distance, like a dare.



Mark Rothko  
*Untitled*, 1960  
Mixed media on canvas  
Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1970.55



John George Brown  
*The Country Gallants*, 1876  
Oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Bequest in Memory of her Father, Maurice A. Scott, 1949.23

## Sam Wright

# 17

*Dedicated to the 17 victims of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas H S shootings in Parkwood, FL on Valentine's Day, 2018.*

Though they are not, they might be Huck and Tom, Becky and Emmaline, gallants and gals in a simpler time. The wild woodlands, the verdure of white pines, the golden rust of birches, fuse, blend in ripples upon the shallow face of a slow, welcoming brook.

How lazy the day, how innocent the guidance, the helping hands.

The boulders and the treefalls have shoulders rounded by time,  
are too sage to suggest anything but peaceful whispers or a refreshing nap.

One boy, shoeless in the water, holds steady, his feet planted in the painting's background; while his friends balance atop a fallen log, bridging the waters and the painting's foreground. Children, can you imagine what lies beyond the next hill, or the place I view you from?

For you, the death and carnage of the Civil War is one decade gone.

But other disasters are lurking: soon, someone may stumble upon your little paradise and clear the trees; someday, an entrepreneur may wet his hanky in the brook before drilling a well that pollutes the water. Far worse, someone you know and trust may blame you for his misfortune and his pain, and bring a rifle to school and slaughter your friends, obliterating their futures.

As families mourn, someone else will defend the insanity, claiming (using highfalutin words) that killing children is a right guaranteed by a piece of paper so infirm it is housed in a museum. It will be up to you, 21st Century Beckys, Toms & Hucks, to reach out again and set things right, to speak up and demand safe schools—as you are—and end the philosophical tomfoolery.

I wish I could be blind to the countless horrors that taint the time and space separating you and I, jading this portrait of your wholesome day afield—because it breaks my heart to see what you once were and what we have become.

ADULT

# Ekphrastic Writing

POETRY CONTEST 2020

