

Ekphrasis

/'ekfrəsəs/ noun

-the use of detailed description of a work of visual art as a literary device

*Poems inspired by artwork in The Delaplaine's National Juried
Photography Exhibition by members of the Maryland Writer Association
Frederick Chapter*



THE DELAPLAINE
arts CENTER

M MARYLAND
WRITERS'
ASSOCIATION

Photograph: *Lioness* by Shaina Nyman Sheerzan

Poem: *Lioness* by Nicole Abuhamada



Lioness

We trussed the beeswax candles on a line to taper.
The smell of religion, aged and adiopocere—

it could be described no other way.

The candles brandished
their torch triumphantly
in the darkling morning.
I huddled with the women
in the antechamber, in the bustle.

Why do I have to wear a scarf on my head, mommy?

The crowd fell away,
revealing the imposing figure
of a robed priest,
my grandfather.

Your hair is your vanity, you must humble your vanity before God.

Mother ushered me to the cabinet,
told me to pick the most beautiful one,
as if fine fabric could distract me from the indictment.
As I donned my penance, silken, and sulking in green

a woman caught fire

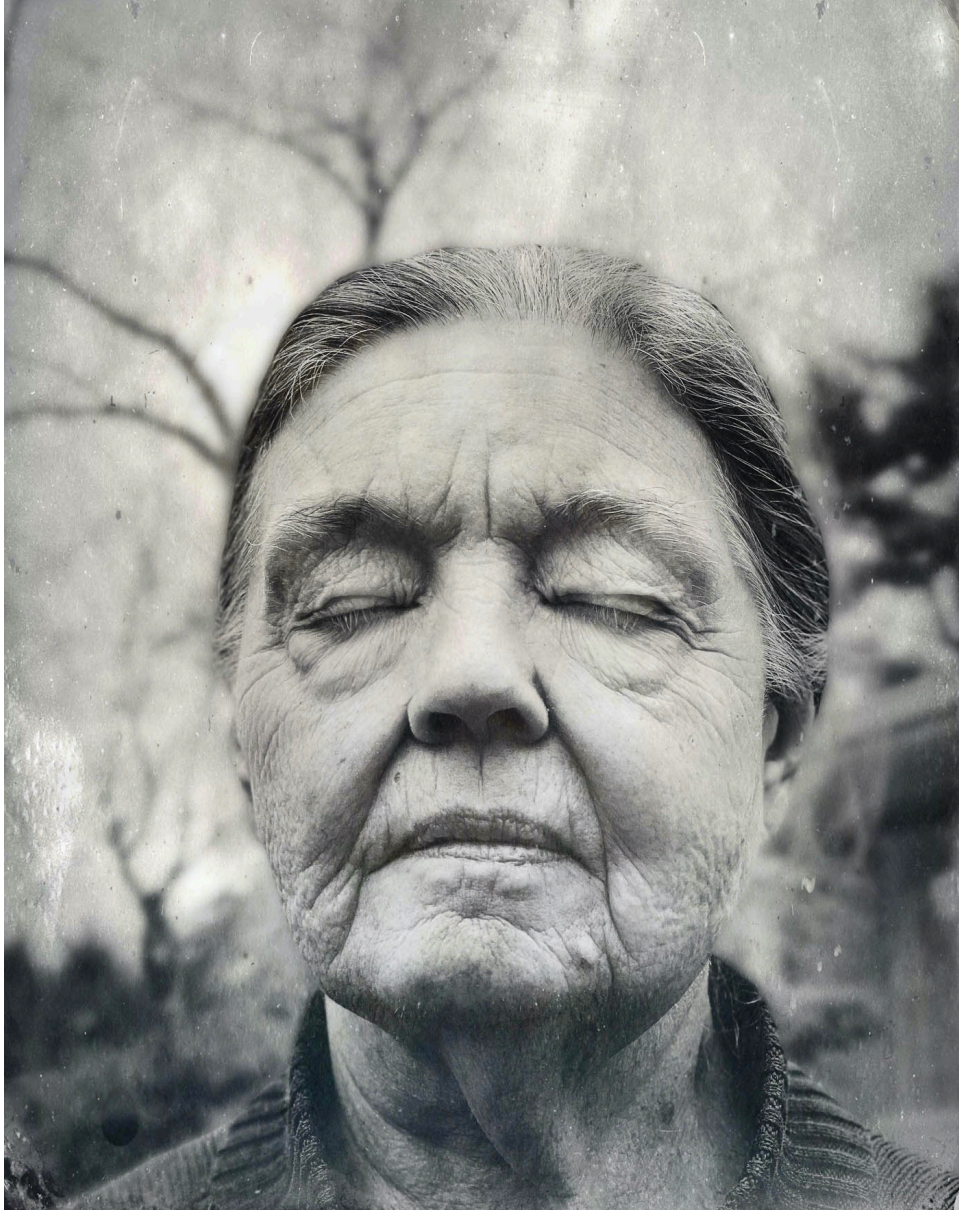
when her scarf passed near the candle I made.
I said nothing
as I watched her scarf burn,
burning up the ruched seam,
blackening the edge,
climbing next her soot-stained hair.
She didn't even notice
as her vanity was liberated.

A field of Tulips gave us beeswax.
They are full of God's grace, I am told.
Sometimes I stare at them
to see them give sway—
like my faith in you.

Sometimes, I don a headscarf—
because I am a lioness.

Photograph: *Mom, Eyes Closed* by Lynne Breitfeller

Poem: *Living in Oneness* by Pamela and David Brunell



Living in Oneness

Goodbyes upwelling with sadness
always hurt
The more permanent the separation,
the deeper the grief
Did we know each other in a previous life?
Will we recognize each other
on the other side this time?
The Hereafter now calling us both
all too soon
Pray that shared bitter-sweet sorrow brings
everlasting relief and bond eternal
The rising sun's golden glow
pierces clouds of despair
Ebony horizons flame coral to a molten blue-white day
Eighty-five years gone by in the blink of an eye
You and I bask in our final communion
of morning sunrise
One last time our hearts
hallow in holy light
Each of us great-grandmothers
now facing final earthly uprooting
You—proud matriarch pear tree standing
silver-weathered, branch-cracked
bough-scattered, bark-pocked and
sap-sucked by beetle and bird
My face a dark landscape of
life's crevices and creases
web-rooted in Mother Earth
Our heads reaching for stars and heavens above
The two of us mirror shared struggles and strivings,
Triumphs, and earth-grappled wisdom
Anchored in life-nourishing dirt with roots, feet, hands and sweat—
each other's perfect partner against onslaughts
of human ravage, creatures, self-deluded ego, and pandemic kind
Nurtured by each other's undaunted spirit—

Five years old, you were a spry sapling
and Me a little girl
We grew up and old together
your young green limbs beckoning
to climb and play and laugh and relish your sweet fruit
We shared the crosswinds of adolescence,
birthing our first offspring
coddling three generations to
cherish and foster nature's sacred heaven-sent gifts
My dear sister pear, my ever-giving tree,
stronger together, our seeds are planted—
Nothing more to do, no more to give
Just listening to the Winds breathing
across your branches and deep ravines of my face
Two great-grandmothers embracing one last time—

The voice of God Whispering
Let go and Let Me
Trust in my everlasting arms
This one morning is all there is
Living in Oneness
This Moment, the secret of All
there ever was and ever will be
You trusted even without knowing
You did your part
I'll carry you the rest of the way.

Photograph: *Untitled* by Ava_Margueritte

Poem: *Birdwatching 101–A Raptor?* by Roderick Deacey



BIRDWATCHING 101–A RAPTOR?

It flew by too fast!

It definitely wasn't an eagle or an owl.

It wasn't an osprey, not black and white
and no fish—they're always holding a fish.

Perhaps it was a peregrine falcon
but maybe it wasn't quite that fast,
so it had to be one of the hawks.

A goshawk, then, a northern goshawk—
such an excellent name! No, not big enough.

I suppose it may have been a common or garden
red-tailed hawk—and isn't there
a red-shouldered hawk? A possibility...

It didn't have feathered legs
so clearly not a rough-legged hawk.

I think it was bigger than a kestrel
which could mean a sharp-shinned hawk
or a Cooper's hawk—I don't know
what either of those really look like.

How many hawks are there, anyway?

It flew by too fast! I was lighting a cigar—

I couldn't focus the binoculars in time
and it was just a hooked-beak brownish blur
zooming past. But I am almost certain
it was a raptor...

Photograph: *In the Wind* by Domenic Cicala

Poem: *A Dryad Drops By* by Roderick Deacey



Note: According to legend, dryads (tree spirits) were reputed to wrap themselves in their hair and remain still when they didn't wish to be seen. While they did not become invisible, they became part of the background, like a tree in the forest, and were ignored.

A DRYAD DROPS BY

One thing to remember—
your secrets are safe with me.
See, no one can see me now,
I'm invisible, gone, not here.
I'll just keep very still and wait
and listen. Oak, Ash and Thorn!
You folks think about strange things!
And talk about weird goings on,
nothing natural at all—
give me leaves and linnets every time!

As soon as everything is asleep
I'll slide back to the oaks—
cloaked by the dark, quiet as a whisper—
and fade into my beautiful tree.
You can look for me if you like.
You won't find me
but I'll be there,
in the wind.

Photograph: *Morning Sentinel* by Vincent Ferrari

Poem: *Sentinel* by Roderick Deacey



Sentinel

Meditating, he sits motionless,
his mount responsive to his need for stillness.
The land asks for respect, serenity;
these sandstone buttes hold sacred spaces.
Soon the sentinel will patrol the arid landscape
with the ravens and the rock wrens,
past the carcasses of defeated monsters,
past the waxy juniper, sage and yucca,
circling saguaro, barrel and prickly pear—life
thriving in the xeric air.

This Navajo Nation territory needs
constant vigilance
for white men can never be trusted—
how many treaties with Native Americans
have they broken?

All of them.

Photograph: *Hanging by a Wire* by Domenic Cicala

Poem: *Hanging by a Wire* by Zorina Exie Frey



Hanging by a Wire

For Maurice and Cadaysha, who you were, who you became, and who you are.

As if in flight.
As if in suspension
Her wrist and head swivel in restraints.
Feet unbound to roam wherever.

No, fuck this.

It's said that after this, there is no male or female. That there is no marriage.

Nobody belongs to anyone. Just bliss.

But even the Angels wondered what and who is man
that God is mindful of him.

And woman came from man, and man came from woman,
and woman can grow a penis and man's penis grows
so woman can grow more penises.

There are no nipples to suckle or titillate.
No vagina to birth or penetrate.
Do Angels procreate?

Hiding their wings in ink under thin layers of epidermis
hoping to unfurl them with faith.

What and who are Angels that man idolizes and romanticizes as
servants?
Suspending them like fantastical griffins.

They sometimes substitute their wings with mortal restraints of choice:
"He" or "She" when They are the Themes of legions wandering about us

like we about them who are brave enough to embrace all they are.

They say, "Everybody's gay," but perhaps
everybody traded their wings for puppet strings

bound to roam wherever
wrists and heads swivel in restraints.

As if in suspension.

As if in flight.

No, fuck this.

Photograph: *Hot Summer Night* by R. Andrew Hoff

Poem: *Hot Summer Night* by William Haxton



Hot Summer Night

Mama? Why are we here?
Him. You know why. I couldn't stay in Midland anymore.
Where were we before Midland?
Austin. And before that Galveston.
Where before Galveston?
Laredo, and Houston, and Corpus Christi.
Before Corpus Christi?
You weren't born yet.
Where was I before I was born?
Someplace. No one knows.
How long are we here?
I don't know. For a while.
I want to know where we're going next, Mama. Tell me.
Someplace good I hope. I wish I knew, Honey.

Photograph: *Road Trip* by Dave Hanson

Poem: *Road Trip* by Kari Martindale



Road Trip

Arm stiff from 14-hour days,
attached to the wheel as we race across states;

no time to pose for selfies, we speed-
where billboards and yard signs do not deceive,
through expanses of countryside where political trustees
have conditioned constituents to embrace bigotry.

I won't wake her-she's not dressed to go out;
especially at a station along this route,
at a latitude and longitude
where her nudity poses a threat
to the territorial servitude
of political Prudity.

Detach me from the wheel; carry me into the canteen;
prop me up in a booth so they all can see
the stiffness of my truth as I survey the scene,
a keen eye through the window, watching her peace-
fully sleep.

One whiff of steam is all I need
to fuel my vigilance before we proceed
through counties chain-linked by the death of dreams;

where bloodshed is preferred to democracy,
where they've been taught to hate with ferocity,
where they lean on distorted religiosity,
where choosing her bathroom
provokes animosity.

Photograph: *Bird Hotel* by Walter Plotnick

Poem: *Circling the Bird Hotel* by Joanne Oh



Circling the Bird Hotel

Eleven birds – too large to make their bold
attempts to cram inside work, still eager – tossed
seeds into the rooms, grandpa says. Snores teeter

in and out. The routine: rest, reset one
story, retell. A bird, once a bolt-hider,
becomes a weary traveler with greased toes.
Do his anecdotes, like aged stereos,
distort? Or do they warp time or reset tense:
present, future, past in orbit, held
by a bird hotel, seed storage, trees on trees.

Photograph: *Heads in the Sand* by Jelisa Peterson

Poem: *beach day* by Patti Ross



Beach Day

we smiling
we laughing
we having fun
we covering against
summer's scorching sun

we smiling
we laughing
we playing
we feel grit against skin
evoking ancestral kin

we looking saying
hello again

Photograph: *Second Thoughts* by Carol Leadbetter

**Poem: *Thoughts on Carol Leadbetter's "Second Thoughts"* by
Tiffany A. Santos**



Thoughts on Carol Leadbetter's "Second Thoughts"

The composite image shows three figures
but only one—
A woman as Trinity.

She holds a flower as if it is her maidenhood,
this bare-breasted mother,
this solemn-faced crone.

The flower is large and many-petaled,
white but not recognizable to me,
amateur gardener I am.

The photograph appears aged,
its edges uneven
like a flickering film.

The effect reminds me of Nosferatu,
her music is lost
her expression ambiguous.

Yet there is light—a source unseen
like the Dutch Masters,
a hint of Caravaggio's chiaroscuro.

The black of her hair, grey tones layered on her skirt,
the hollows made from her collarbones,
the near white of her belly, her breast.

She doesn't speak her thoughts to me,
of left or right or center,
a simulacrum who keeps her own counsel.

Photograph: *Jump* by Jenny Pivor

Poem: *Leap of Faith* by Joni Youse



Leap of Faith

Brothers were born that day,
bound by bravado and sex and sunshine.
We laughed and we flew
and the camera chased us into the murky water.
We took those leaps of faith,
fear almost gone,
pure joy captured when we jumped.
You swam ahead,
trying to catch up to her.
The one in the sage silky shorts that took her hours to find,
then seconds to remove.
It was an afternoon full of hopes and dreams and lust.
A day that was only supposed to last
until the sun slipped under the ocean.
Your anger came in waves
the silky shorts long gone,
baby clothes drying in the salty breeze.
The three of you never have a chance.
I couldn't help you little brother,
I was swimming in doubt,
slowly drowning at my own pace.
Our brother from that day found you.
You jumped alone,
fear and darkness
replacing faith and sunshine.
Branches and seaweed clinging to your gray shorts.
He wanted to rescue you, wanted to save us
but the murky water offered you peace.
We went to your funeral together,
him and her and the baby and me.
A new family, bound by a day of love and lust and grief.
I found the picture when I was looking for my answer,
three brothers who laughed and flew,
I chose to remember sunshine and let the joy of that day
wash over me.

Photograph: *Last Clasp* by Lynne Breitfeller

Poem: *The Lifecycle of the Bra* by Joni Youse



The Lifecycle of the Bra

Spring brought budding trees and my first bra,
to be worn under a high collared Easter dress
that tried to choke the life out of me.
Paired with old saddle shoes that I had to wear,
just one more time,
or one more eternity,
before I would be free to run in the dew covered grass.
Summer was for tank tops that showed fancy straps,
and bikini tops that hid shy smiles.
Spending every moment in the sun,
I would flip every hour
perfecting dark tan lines,
that would define what was off limits
during the honeysuckle nights.
Fall was the time for new bras that covered old memories,
sizing me up for a lifetime of nylon cups
that held my heart while breaking.
Stained with sweat and tears and
mothers milk.
Practical friends that contained and restrained
hopes and dreams.
My winter is coming.
Gray hair and drooping breasts arrived,
along with a strong gust of confidence.
Saddle shoes changed into hiking boots,
dresses long ago faded into blue jeans
and a flannel shirt, unbuttoned slowly,
revealing an ivory lace bra
that you unclasp for the last time.

Biographies of the Poets:

Nicole Abuhmada is an interdisciplinary literary and visual artist with specialization in poetry and painting. She is a former fashion model and film actress, known worldwide as the winner of the popular TV show, America's Next Top Model, hosted by Tyra Banks.

Growing up in Boulder, CO, Nicole studied visual art at Armantrout Studio, and went on to be recognized and win several awards from the Scholastic Art Awards. She then moved to Los Angeles where she had a career as a model with clients like Paul Mitchel, Pepsi, and the Marvel Avengers. From there she studied acting. Her filmography includes theatrical productions Ashley, Paradise Club, and The Last Survivors, among others.

Nicole reapplied herself to the study of visual art and writing after a successful career as a performer. Nicole earned her degree in Studio Art and Creative Writing, going on to write, illustrate, and publish her first book, Lipton Loves in 2021. Nicole lives in Frederick, Maryland, with her husband, Jacob, and their son, Idris.

Pamela Brunell writes as Pamela Smith. She recently published a book of poems centered on the 17 years she spent with her husband and two sons in Africa and Vietnam as well as her farm in Maryland.

Her book, "Beloving," is an autobiography in poetry form. The stories include her reaction to seeing new worlds and meeting memorable people. You'll discover over 100 poems and stories and 70 images about the African bush, elephants, love, yoga, nature, family, friendship, the chakras, a meditation, and prayers.

Pam lives on a farm and nature sanctuary in Middletown where she cavorts with honeybees, wildflowers, butterflies, and her tomato gardens.

Roderick Deacey worked as a professional editor and writer for many years, first for the Chicago Sun-Times Syndicate, then for News America Syndicate and The Times of London Syndicate. He says, "Editing daily newspaper columns trained me to quickly identify where writing of all genres can be improved. These days, poets frequently send me their work for critiquing and polishing prior to publication." He is co-editor of Pen in Hand, Maryland Writers Association's literary journal.

Deacey is also a performing poet in the DC area, based in Frederick, Maryland. He regularly performs with drummer and bass player, presenting "neo-beat" poems inspired by the Beat Poets' poetry and jazz forays of the nineteen-fifties. Deacey was awarded the 2019 Frederick Arts Council Carl R. Butler Award for Literature. Crossing genres, he won the Gold Award for Best Lyrics in the 2020 Mid-Atlantic Song Contest held by the Songwriters Association of Washington. Many of his contemporary poems have been published in literary journals and magazines. This year, one of his beat poems was included in New Generation Beats 2022 Anthology published by the National Beat Poetry Foundation, featuring beat poets from all over the world.

Zorina Exie Frey is a digital designer, publishing content writer, and spoken word poet. She's a semi-finalist for America's Next Great Author Pilot TV show and a Birmingham Film Festival nominee in two categories for her screenplay, Harley Quinn Origin. Her writings are featured in Shondaland, Chicken Soup for the Soul: I'm Speaking Now, The American Journal of Poetry, and Glassworks Magazine. Zorina is the co-host of Writing Class Radio and Poetry Editor for South 85 Journal. She is a Palm Beach Poetry Festival Langston Hughes Fellow, Martha's Vineyard Institute of

Creative Writing Voices of Color Fellow, and a featured poet for the 2022 National Association for Poetry Therapy Conference.

Bill Haxton: Proof you do not have to die to be reincarnated, Bill's career--if you can call it that--lurched from Air Force pilot to route gardener to furniture designer to construction laborer to radio producer to college administrative consultant to classical chamber music director. Somehow in that span, he and his wife Anne spent seven years sailing the Pacific Ocean on their 41 foot sloop Sendaya.

Kari Martindale is President of the Frederick Chapter of Maryland Writers' Association. Her words have been published by a variety of journals and anthologies and nominated for several awards, including the Pushcart Prize. She has been featured in poetry and spoken word events across Maryland and can be found at www.kariannmartindale.com. She dedicates this poem, "Road Trip," to Alyssa.

Joanne Oh's poetry has appeared in Palette Poetry, Poet Lore, and Hobart, among others. She holds a B.A. in Writing Seminars from Johns Hopkins University.

Patti Ross aka "little pi" is a spoken word artist and poet. She is an advocate for truth and equity and an active member of The Poor Peoples Campaign. As a warrior for social justice she believes in historical accountability and the fight against systemic poverty.

Tiffany A. Santos (she/they) is an internationally published and award-winning poet, speculative fiction author, creative nonfiction essayist, and blogger, who describes her work as emotionally provocative yet disturbingly honest. Her poem "Baptism" won the Best Poem Award in the 2019 Backbone Mountain Review. Find her online at: linktr.ee/cranberryjade.

Joni Youse is a long time resident of Maryland. Her poetry has appeared online at the Washington Writers' Publishing House, washingtonwriters.org and the Adirondack Center for Writing, adirondackcenterforwriting.org. Joni's interests include reading, hiking and collecting vintage paperback books.