



# BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART

## Poetry Jam Finalists 2018

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On David Habben's *Peace, Be Still*

"Blood and Milk: Isaiah 49:15-16"

by Julia Campbell Bernards

Life is given  
in torturous tenderness.  
From pores  
pours power,  
perfectly suited to the need,  
and given  
in gentle, supplicating,  
Agony.

Love and labor's strain  
awaken God's gift--  
to exude life  
to the helpless,  
to give myself, selfless,  
to rejoice  
in the offspring  
offered me.

On Bruce H. Smith's *Jacob and Leah*

"Anymore"

by Simone Johnson Blanchard

Let me take off my glasses and see more clearly.

There you are—

"Are," staring vacantly in the chair.

The plant between us is the only real thing living here—

Touch it; it's plastic.

"What?"

You sit up from your slouch miles away, glance at my shoulder.

The only part of each of us that's here

Is the part determined to show we're gone.

*Did you hear me?*

"What, did you say?" Now you're looking away.

A careful reply matches my careful comportment:

"My eyes hurt."

"You should put your glasses back up; perhaps not wearing them is giving you a headache."

*No*, my mind says again, *I can see you now, can't I? Can I?*

But,

"Maybe you're right," is what my mouth says.

And his mind is saying something different too,  
Than what his lips are pushing through.  
My eyes downcast, but I see into his  
Clearly, as the split in our wall

—is it “his wall/my wall” now?—

“Don’t sit there. You’re giving me a headache.”

I can feel it, the headache, coming through his stare even though his eyes are just boring into the checkered flooring. He doesn’t look at me anymore.

My eyes bore like yours to the floor,  
except into the blue  
ribbon leading to the door—  
—leading you back to me? I can’t decide, but  
I know that’s not how you think  
anymore.

My hazels gazing now into the sea,  
The blue wriggling ribbon proving to me  
That the smallest thing can become an ocean  
And the largest thing can become a pointless-pointless little ribbon.  
Guess I’m holding my own hand now,  
Continued in this stance  
Before the support of my own wall  
falls  
  
down.

On Bruce H. Smith's *Jacob and Leah*

"Jacob and Leah"

by KathArine Bradbury

A Letter to Her Father, a Jacob and Leah Reponse

I know he doesn't love me. T

he truth of it sits on my

Shoulders and it weighs me

To the checkered floor until

I'm on my knees

Begging

Father, please.

I know he wants it to be her.

He hasn't said, and I think

Politeness holds him back, but

He lifted the veil and recoiled.

Father, am I soiled?

I know he's unhappy.

The set of his jaw is

Hard. His voice is clipped.

He doesn't talk to me

Except when he has to. F

ather, what shall I do?

I know I'm not her.

I've never been Rachel.

She is beautiful and my

Tender heart shows in my eyes

Father, I'm no prize.

I know the rules.

But Father, couldn't you have just broken them once?

I know that I'm stuck here.

There is no alternative.

No more backdoors or trapdoors.

If this is truly the case

And there is honestly nothing else

Give me the strength to last.

I'm on my knees, begging.

Father, please.

On Michael Soelberg's *A Blessed Curse*

"Gray, Clay-Like Bodies"

by Alixa Brobbey

Our lips meet  
in a perpendicular kiss.  
A perfect Pythagorean  
corner is created.  
And I know that  
given the chance,  
I would swallow  
that bitter fruit whole,  
feel its chunky mass  
slither down my throat again  
if only to taste a  
cherry cheek on skin cold.

Pink nose placed  
persistently against  
my own. And I hope  
that all the hard rigid  
ridges of our freed bodies,  
(gray, clay-like bodies;  
pale blushes devoid  
of divine presence)  
can withstand the  
bitter brutality of  
our new mortality.

My love, as we meet  
in this embrace,

your brow bristles gently  
against my own.

Your hand clutches  
closely clung curls.

Releases them.

Never, in all of Eden  
did my skin feel as  
frosted as my ice-like eyes.

Never, in all of Eden  
did I feel this lovely and light.



On Ron Richmond's *Nativity* (no. 3)

"Innocence"

by Ashley Chase

If I could see my brother again  
Dancing down a dock in Cancun  
Head held high under the feathery weight  
Of a sombrero dancing gold thread  
I would plant him in that moment  
Root him to the ground  
In billowing white chains.

I would carve him into wooden paneling  
Surrounding us, fossilized  
As the planks petrified to quartz.

I would strip him of his future and his past  
Of the bullies, the job interviews, the ex girlfriends,  
The magazines, the late night sodas, the goodbye kisses  
The hunched back, the pimply braces  
The damp pillowcases  
Of the spindly shame that would twist  
And curdle the light in his eyes.

I would leave him naked and bare  
Under that sombrero  
Sunning under the sky  
Warm forever on grainy beaches  
As the tide washed in and out.

On M. C. Escher's *Predestination* and *The Horseman*

"Predestination and the Horseman"

by Scott Darrington

**A tired mask, a soldier with no spear,**  
the grid lines' gray alliances dissolve  
**his horse; he tries in vain one hand to steer**  
as white fish and black birds below revolve  
**away from blue close-horse-stepping neck,**  
through kidney bean's front-phasing smile, a speck,  
**his frowning parallel, no hope to peck**  
the toothless beak before his hollow neck's  
**dye-hiding hat, the red lock that revolves**  
heat becomes a pretzel's prayer. The toothy sneer  
**from horse's bite, his piercing guilt absolve**  
before pure bird attacks and wields his spear.

*Author's Note: I feel I should preface it with an explanation of the form, since it's integral to reading the poem correctly: it's written as a "double exposure," meaning the bold lines can be read all together, the unbolded lines can be read all together, and then all the lines can be read top to bottom. The bolded lines are based on Escher's "The Horseman" and the unbolded lines are based on "Predestination." My recommended way to read it would be in that order: bolded, unbolded, all together.*

On the Hole Bored into M. C. Escher's *Depth* Woodblock

by Logan Davis

Because sardines, red and upside down, packed  
together like torpedoes don't look n  
ormal, Mr. Escher. If you would just follo

w art rules we wouldn't

t

have to take

these kin

ds of

pr ec

au ti

o ns,

M r. E

sch er. It's

so in convenie

nt for u s,

just as much a

s it is for

you. I t's to protect the art. Li ke

copyright. Only ori ginals sell. Frauds abound.

Just follow the rules, Mr. Escher.

On J. Kirk Richard's *Breath of Life*

"Breath of Life"

by Bayley Goldsberry

Are we afraid of Her glory?

Must we hush the mouth

That speaks the Mother's name?

Is she a sliver of doubt

in our traditional minds?

My body tells me, nay,

She is in you.

The curvatures of Her body

Are manifest in the

Curvatures of mine.

The powers of Her creations

Are lining my hands

And my insides.

I am lit afire

To see Her,

Infinite and eternal,

Bathed in a golden light,

Telling me

"You will one day understand."

On Tiffany Studio's *The Reader*

"The Reader"

by Amanda Hall

The red cover drapes over  
her fingers, like crimson ribbon

backing, but no words are  
visible. Her eyes are not reading,

but looking beyond, past the  
pages, the binding, the gold-shine

of her sleeves. Those eyes, like  
a sea that has not made up its

mind, are not quite blue and not quite  
gray, but they are looking at me.

No, not at me. Through me,  
as though my soul needs to be

seen, as an invitation to  
join her story, but I want to

watch a moment longer, to let my  
own eyes linger on warm light

coming through glass, assigning her  
with soft creams and surrounding

her with mottled greens and two pink  
flowers adorning her chestnut hair.

Maybe I am done noticing now; maybe  
I am ready to be pulled inside her story.

On Trevor Southey's *Jesus and Mary: The Moment After*

“RISEN!”

by Cynthia L. Hallen

Hazy dawn brings Mary, reveals two men:

“Why weepst thou?” the messengers console.

“They have taken my Lord,” she wilts for him,

“My Lord, who was promised to make hearts whole.”

Where the petals have been scattered and bruised

To a fallen white wild-flower she bends,

There on the grief-damp earth, beholds a man

In the garden she supposes he tends.

“Woman, why weepst thou? Whom seekest thou?”

He soothes. Her voice quivers as the wind blows

And softly holds her hope of finding Him.

“Mary,” says Jesus, like light to a rose.

“Rabboni,” she tremors, turns to the Son.

“Go, tell my brethren.” She smiles, starts to run.”





On M. C. Escher's *Liberation*

"Liberation"

by Catherine Jungheim

Point becomes line, line morphs into new form.

Form wakes up and is a bird, downy warm.

Bird transforms when it learns that it can fly,

and does so. Magnify smallest member

and geometry results. Macrify

Cosmos, you're a tiny quantum ember.

Time, wild from flowing in one direction

converges paths, diverging in flexion.

Inanimate to alive—to anoint

sacred movement toward Godhood-is the point.

On Norman Rockwell's *Lift up Thine Eyes*

"What Will They Say?"

by Kathryn Passey

The final stroke on the robe, the last dove in place,  
He drops his brush, rubs his long face with a wearied hand,  
And steps back to look at his work.

The dully clad New Yorkers,  
With shoulders and necks bent and hanging,  
Toward the grayest street below them.

The little boy grasping his mother's hand,  
Pulling back against the walking traffic,  
Looking longingly into the eyes of the viewer.

The priest and his deacon, standing above the crowd,  
Creating for the people a message,  
That they wish would be seen and understood.

The church face, standing erect above the street,  
With depth and stained glass color and adorned statues,  
And a golden-light welcome shining within the door.

Seeing all this he can't help but wonder, what will they say?  
He worries and frets and wrings his hands for a moment,  
Wishing to protect his creations from prodding eyes.

Perhaps they will misunderstand the priest,  
Under his heavy robes of authority,  
And believe he is perfect and upright at all times.

Or perhaps they will condemn him for hypocrisy,  
Of teaching the people to look up, to lift their eyes,  
When his own eyes cannot reach the heavens, only the message board.

Perhaps they will hate the New Yorkers, for making the mistake,  
That they all make in their own lives every day,  
Of bustling about, with heads down and busy, and hearts heavy.

Perhaps they will hate them without knowing them,  
How the woman in red just wants to be seen by anyone,  
How the skinny, briefcase man has just lost his job of twenty years.  
Perhaps they will judge the small boy,  
And say he is disobedient, rude to pull on his mother,  
When he just wants to stop and pull the painful rock from his shoe.

Norman paces before his work, before his creations,  
Watching them each in turn with worried gaze,  
Trying to come up with a solution to soften their blows.

Abruptly, he picks up his brush, and madly sets to work,  
Just one more character, that's all he needs,  
o he places her carefully, stroke by stroke, on the church steps.

Then he stops, and squints at her, at his mother,  
Clad in her best church dress, the one she wears to funerals,  
Staring out at millions of viewers with her best scolding look.

Coming from within the church, where no one else has bothered to be,  
She has true authority, to reprimand critics, and her fellow characters,  
She alone can stand guard over the painting, so her son need not wonder,

What will they say?

On M. C. Escher's *La Cathédrale Engloutie*

"The City of Ys"

by Hayley Rawle

It is said the fishermen in Brittany still hear the suffocated chimes of the submarine cathedral. On nights as inky as M.C. Escher's woodcut, the water and the firmament the same shades of black. They hear in the patterns of Debussy's rising parallel fifths. The pounded notes of the piano, the silvery circular ripples, a suggestion that the chapel is sinking toward the surface instead of down.

Princess Dahut used to swim naked in that sea around the city. The old gods of air and water spoke as they slipped across her skin while King Gradlon tried to coax her back to church. Dahut took a new lover each night and in the morning sacrificed them to mother sea. But when she finally slept with the devil, the ocean washed down city. Gradlon gave her a fatherly shove off the getaway steed. She drowned. No longer a pagan princess choking her lovers with black satin masks. Now a pagan mermaid who baits Brittany fishermen. She still wants to choke them. In a quieter, watery way.

And the bells of the steeple begin to submerge again. Debussy soaks his song in a decrescendo. And Escher etches a boat for the approaching fishermen.

On J. Kirk Richard's *Fishers of Men and Women*

"Fishers of Men and Women"

by Sage Rogers

Heaving, panting, gasping for  
Air, for release, for hope  
Clambering for firm hands  
Outstretched arms, soft skin of  
Friends who reach to save.  
Nets swung, massive and thick,  
A lifeline to God.  
Fingers tightly wrapped,  
Palms firmly pressed into  
Coarse, tawny rope.  
Through silky fog they see their  
Saviors, not Gods or Kings or  
Governors, but -  
People whose hands lift creased with  
Dust, whose muscles ache with  
Compassion, whose weary cheeks clench,  
Stained with tears, having before been recipients of  
Netted rescue from stormy depths below.

On Brian Kershisnik's *Descent from the Cross*

“Fifth Angel from the Right at the Descent from the Cross”

by Kate Romney

Under the orange sky burning they hold His body  
like the white cloth covering  
they will be robed in at sunrise. Above I sing  
joy-stricken in the fallen ache. I call  
for the man who has given me life.  
In their dark robes wailing  
they do not yet see my face,  
they do not yet see how the color of His skin  
fills my body pure and thick.  
This moment like remembering  
my mother's smooth hands when she held me  
safe and warm in the darkness  
before the call came, before the  
cold ground and the sweet oils and the waiting.  
Before I was here, watching my Lord come unto me.  
I have left the darkness,  
now float in the midst of tears,  
smiling.

On M. C. Escher's *Metamorphosis III*

"Metamorphosis III"

by Devrie Rozsa

This is not what you think it is.

You think you are standing in a nebulous, indefinite space

Until edges become unforgiving, sharp, and grey turns to black.

Each larvae is coiled in the center of its hexagonal hive at the edge of life,

Until it bursts from its fetal form into something greater,

And life spins and whirls.

Out of control, in control.

A state of stillness, of constant motion.

When the birds meet the bees, they make a fish.

And when you meet the center

You become the nexus where chaos and order

Meet at a single point in time.

You become the nexus of chaos and order

When you meet the center

Where the birds meet the bees, and they make a fish.

A state of stillness, of constant motion.

Out of control, in control.

And life spins and whirls

Until it bursts from its fetal form into something greater.

Each player is poised in the center of his square space at the edge of movement

Until edges become forgiving, soft, and black turns to grey.

You think you are standing in a nebulous, indefinite space.

This is not what you think it is.

On M. C. Escher's *Rind*

"The Rind"

by Kaelin Stanley

The Rind

Is the part we throw away

In the trash, down the drain

The part we scratch and peel

and claw,

till all that's left is none at all

"We're made of clouds" I've always heard

But the only way I'd ever know

Is if I take away this skin

So I can see my sky

within

This sky is only called my own

within this rind, my fleshy home.



On Jeffrey Hein's *Convenient Charity*

"Unmasked"

by Heather Talbot

a creamy satin tablecloth,  
shimmering and crisply pressed  
silver, polished to reflection--  
image of perfect charity

below the pageantry  
the truth revealed--  
boxes and cans of bargain brands  
dented and bent  
pantry leftovers  
must be good enough  
I would do more, but--

there are dishes to do, bills to pay, laundry to wash, errands to run,  
groceries to buy, dinner to cook,  
gymnastics and baseball and art class and track and piano and dance,  
homework time, bath time, and bed time—

the call of their needs, muffled by my own--  
by my busy-ness, my weariness  
the least I can give will have to do  
intentions and pretensions meet reality  
my convenient charity--  
unmasked.

On Robert Indiana's *Love*

"Love is Evol Backwards"

by Matthew Wagstaff

Four carved letters of blue and red.

What gives them meaning?

An arbitrary arrangement of symbols,

Each meant to portray a sound.

But sound doesn't explain a concept.

Neither do colors.

Blue.

Sadness.

The verdant depths of the oceans.

Red.

Affection.

The tides of war.

Neither expresses a feeling

That is not truly a feeling.

When I see the four letters,

I blink.

Because they mean

nothing

and

everything.