

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a person's torso and arms. The person is shirtless, and their skin is illuminated from the side, creating deep shadows and bright highlights that emphasize their musculature. Their right arm is raised, with the hand near their shoulder. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. Overlaid on the center of the image is the word "LEGENDS" in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow.

LEGENDS

CONTRIBUTORS

Contributor Notes

DIANA ADAMS

Diana Adams is an Alberta based writer with work published in a variety of journals including Boston Review, Drunken Boat, MiPOesias, PoetsArtists, Fogged Clarity, The Laurel Review, Ekleksogaphia, and many others. Her third book of poetry Hello Ice was published by BlazeVOX Books. Corrupt Press recently published her chapbook Catch.

RON ANDROLA

Ron Androla has been writing & publishing since the 1970's. He remembers the evolution of typewriters. With many books to his credit, his poems are also in various, obscure web spaces. In 2013 he received a Lifetime Achievement award for his contribution to poetry in Erie, Pennsylvania, where he's lived since 1980, and internationally, from Poet's Hall. He remembers Fred Flintstone smoking Winston's. Clemente. To be touch-popping protons in 1954, smiling. Ron Androla is a poet very few read.

JOANN BALINGIT

JoAnn Balingit is the author of a collection of poems, Words for House Story (WordTech Editions, 2013) and two poetry chapbooks. Her previous work, Forage, was awarded the 2011 Whitebird Chapbook Prize. She has been the recipient of fellowships from the Delaware Division of the Arts and The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation as well as the 2010 Global Filipino Literary Award in poetry. Her poems have appeared in Best New Poets, DIAGRAM, Lantern Review, MiPOesias, PoetsArtists, Salt Hill, Smartish Pace, Verse Daily and elsewhere. She is an assistant editor for YesYes Books, and coordinator of the Delaware Writing Region for Scholastic Art & Writing Awards program for 7th – 12th graders. Appointed Delaware's poet laureate in 2008, she teaches poetry for schools and nonprofit organizations and lives with her family in Newark. <http://joannbalingit.org>.

JIM BORING

Jim Boring's poetry has appeared in many journals, anthologies and online venues including Poets and Artists and MiPOesias. His book-length poem, Condo, (Lit Pot Press, 2006), explores aging and loss in a South Florida retirement community. He is co-author of The Horse Adjutant: A Boy's Life in the Holocaust (Shooster Publishing, 2011), and author of Scraps, a novel of Chicago, in manuscript.

TIMOTHY BRAINARD

Tim Brainard currently resides in Arizona and maintains a blog at www.timbrainard.com.

ROBERT LEE BREWER

Robert Lee Brewer is Senior Content Editor of the Writer's Digest Writing Community and the author

of Solving the World's Problems (Press 53). Learn more at www.robertleebrewer.com.

STEVE BRIGHTMAN

2013 has been kind to Steve Brightman, seeing three of his chapbooks released: Like Michelangelo Sorta Said on Poet's Haven Press, Absent The on Writing Knights Press, and In Brilliant Explosions Alone under NightBallet Press. He lives in Kent, Ohio and he refuses to wait for inspiration, so he stockpiles poems like ammunition or canned goods. He might need them some day.

MICHELLE BUCHANAN

Michelle Buchanan is a teaching artist living in Upstate NY.

Michelle's work has been published in PoetsArtists Magazine, Callisophia, and Peripheral Surveys. Additionally, she has pieces included in several private collections including the Chicago based entrepreneur and art collector Howard Tullman.

BRIAN BUSCH

Born in 1970 in Winfield Illinois. Brian attended the American Academy of Art in Chicago, with a focus on Illustration and Fine Art. After graduation Brian became a sculptor and mold maker, working in clay, wax and fiberglass. "The years working in a 3 dimensional medium has given me an education on form that I find extremely useful in creating paintings with a sense of weight and solidity." Brian's return to painting finds him focusing on the figure and still life as well as doing many commissions. Brian has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States and in Germany. Brian remains in Illinois with his wife Kathie.

HOWARD CAMNER

Howard Camner is the author of 17 poetry books and the autobiography Turbulence at 67 Inches. His works are housed in prominent literary collections worldwide including historical archives in the United States and the royal libraries of Great Britain. Camner was named Best Poet in Miami in the New Times "Best of Miami" readers poll edition of 2007. He will be inducted into the MDC Hall of Fame for Literary Arts in 2014 and has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for his most recent poetry book Poems from the Mud Room: Collected Works 1976 - 2012.

PRIS CAMPBELL

Shadows Trail Them Home, a collaboration with Scott Owens, is the most recent of seven collections of poetry by Pris Campbell. She has also been published in numerous journals and nominated three times for a Pushcart Prize. A former Clinical Psychologist, she was sidelined by ME/CFS in 1990. After living in the South, Mid-West, Hawaii, and New England, she now makes her home in the greater West Palm Beach with her husband. Her website is www.poeticinspire.com.

JOSHUA GRAY

Joshua Gray has been a part of many collaborations with Poets and Artists, and has loved the process every time. He also collaborated with artist Sean Yates on a Beowulf adaptation for young readers, published by Zouch Six Shilling Press. From Washington DC, he resides in southern India with his wife and two sons.

ANGELA HARDY

Canadian artist Angela Hardy's portrait and figurative paintings are a combination of pulling her love and desire of "...showing that no matter who we are, we still crave to express our diversity, even when confronted with society's standards of who we should be and then tell our stories from a vividly colorful, positive painted visual." Hardy's newest body of work still upholds her touch of playful whimsy and passion, bringing out her subjects 'True Colors' as she hints at our issues of acceptance and change through her sensuous and imaginative use of her characters. "Through my own journey of beginning to truly understand myself I realized how many of us are searching and seeking ways to express to the world who we really are. I hope that the paintings and posts that I write, regarding both my message and mediums help others to find and live their 'True Colors'

." Hardy's paintings can be found in collections in both North America and Europe by Prestigious Collectors such as Howard Tullman, International Famed photographer Dr. Andy Gotts MBE MA FBIPP, and Canadian Collector Bob Buckingham.

"Angela Hardy's work is simply breathtaking. It oozes depth and feeling and gets under the skin of her subjects. Each brush stroke adds another layer of passion and feeling from this amazing artist and I am proud to have her work in my collection," says photographer Dr. Andy Gotts MBE MA FBIPP.

GRADY HARP

Grady Harp is the Art and Poetry Reviewer for POETS and ARTISTS magazine and writes for other publications as well. He is the Art Historian for the quarterly journals THE ART OF MAN and VITRUVIAN LENS and he has provided chapters and introductions to numerous books such as Powerfully Beautiful and 100 Artists of the Male Figure. His essays and articles appear in three major books on art - Eros & Adonis, Coco: The Testimony of Black and White, and The Trilogy of the Doubt distributed internationally. His poetry appears in the monograph entitled WAR SONGS: Metaphors in Clay and Poetry from the Vietnam Experience, a publication that accompanied a two year traveling exhibition, INCONVENIENT STORIES: Vietnam War Veterans by Jeffrey Wolin, and in art/poetry collaborations with Judith Peck, Rebecca Zenn, Lizabeth Teracina, Laurie Kolp and Hector Milia, and Jaime Valero. As an art gallerist he has presented premiere artists from throughout

the world for such exhibitions as WADE REYNOLDS: Full Circle Retrospective, BODY LANGUAGE: Current Figurative Painters, INDOMITABLE SPIRITS: The Figure at the End of the Century and MEMENTO MORI: Contemporary Still Life. He has produced exhibitions for the Arnot Art Museum in New York, Fresno Museum of Art, Nevada Museum of Art, National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum in Chicago, and Cleveland State University Art Gallery and has served as a contributing artistic advisor for universities and colleges throughout California, in Berlin, the Centro Cultural de Conde Duque in Madrid, and in Oslo, Norway. He lives in Los Angeles, CA.

JP HOWARD

JP Howard aka Juliet P. Howard is a poet, Cave Canem graduate fellow, member of The Hot Poets Collective and native New Yorker. She curates and nurtures Women Writers in Bloom Poetry Salon and Blog (WWBPS), a forum offering women writers at all levels a venue to come together in a positive and supportive space. WWBPS hosts monthly literary Salons throughout NY and the blog accepts submissions of poetry. JP was a Lambda Literary Foundation 2012 and 2011 Emerging LGBT Voices Fellow, as well as a Cave Canem 2011 Fellow in Residence at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. She was a 2009-2010 finalist in the poetry category by the Lesbian Writer's Fund of Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. She was also the recipient of a Soul Mountain Retreat writing residency in 2010. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in: Adrienne: A Poetry Journal of Queer Women, The Best American Poetry Blog, MiPOesias iPad Companion, African Voices Magazine, Kweli Journal, The Mom Egg, "Of Fire, Of Iron" a debut collection of poetry by The Hot Poets Collective, Talking Writing, Muzzle Magazine, Muzzle's 2011 "Best of the First Year" Print Issue, Connotation Press, Brown Girl Love, TORCH, Queer Convention: A Chapbook of Fierce, Cave Canem Anthology XII: Poems 2008-2009, Cave Canem XI 2007 Anthology, Promethean Literary Journal, The Portable Lower East Side (Queer City) and Poetry in Performance. She was awarded an MFA in Creative Writing from the City College of New York in 2009, holds a BA from Barnard College as well as a JD from Brooklyn Law School. <http://womenwritersinbloompoetrysalon.blogspot.com>.

SCOTT KICHE

Scott Kiche is a contemporary artist living in Los Angeles. His work ranges from traditional realism to Surrealism. The artist was born in Guatemala in 1974. Like many artists Kiche's journey in art began at a very early age. Kiche is a realist artist and has worked in this style throughout his entire career. He has exhibited works in Mexico City, Virginia, Washington D.C, Maryland, Chicago, Los Angeles and Texas. He also has received awards in several group shows and magazine publications. Kiche currently completed a successful tour with The International Realism Guild in a two year traveling museum exhibition that explored the current state of realism in the 21st century.

JENNIFER KOE

Jennifer Koe is a photographer living in North Carolina. Her work has appeared

in MiPoesias, Junsjazz, iArtistas, and Eye on the Street as well as The Darkroom Gallery, Zhou B Art Center, and MPLS Photo Center.

DAVID KRUMP

David Krump works in politics and the nonprofit sector in Wisconsin. He received the Ruth Lilly Fellowship, the Poetry Foundation/Newberry Library Fellowship, the Rosenberg Prize, and the Niedecker Award.

LARRY LAWRENCE

Larry Lawrence graduated from Rutgers University where he studied Theatre Arts and playwriting. He is a teacher of the gifted and talented for a large public school system in New Jersey. He has been writing poetry for many years and “gets published one poem at a time”. Visit his blog at crownedwithlaurels.blogspot.com and follow him on Twitter- @TheAmericanPoet

JOSEPHINE LIPUMA

Josephine Lipuma is in new media work whose creative practices cut through writing, painting and drawing, interactive projects, short films, time-based video/performance, plus photography, which dwell in her creative quiver. Her work is in national and international collections. She has exhibited most recently at the Zhou B Center, Chicago, IL (Light Sense July/August 2013 curated by Sergio Gomez), plus The Garfield Conservatory Mobile Installation Exhibition, Chicago, IL (October/November 2013 curated by Edra Soto).

HECTOR MILIA

Hector Milia is a musician living in Miami Florida. He is a graduate of the University of Miami where he majored in theatre. When not taking part in Miami’s vibrant music scene, Mr. Milia can often be found painting murals all over south Florida.

EDWARD NUDELMAN

I write poems when I’m not divining water or digging up bones. I’ve got a couple books out there and a bunch of poems in a bunch of journals. I used to be a scientist but I gave that up for a more lucrative writing career. For more information, please google Edward Nudelman, cavedweller.

JUDITH PECK

Judith Peck has exhibited her work in venues nationwide including Target Gallery in Alexandria, Virginia and the Masur Museum in Monroe, Louisiana both awarding Peck the juror’s award, Aqua Art Miami and a solo show at the Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Her paintings have been featured numerous times in Poets Artists as well as The Artist’s Magazine, American

Art Collector Magazine, Combustus, Catapult Magazine and The Kress Project book published by the Georgia Museum of Art. Peck is currently affiliated with Mayer Fine Art in Norfolk, Virginia and represented by Gallery 65 in McLean, Virginia, Gallery C in North Carolina and Alida Anderson Art Projects in Potomac, Maryland. You may see more of her work at www.judithpeck.net.

SAMUEL PERALTA

Samuel Peralta's poetry has been recognized with numerous awards, including from the BBC, UK Poetry Society, a Palanca Award, and shortlists for the League of Canadian Poets and ARC Poem of the Year. His books were all #1 Amazon Kindle Hot New Releases in Poetry, and ranked at the top of the Poetry Bestseller lists. A physicist, business leader, and software developer, he was awarded an Innovative Technology Achievement Award for ebook software development. His poetry blog can be found at www.samuelperalta.com.

SAM RASNAKE

Sam Rasnake's works have appeared in The Southern Poetry Anthology, Best of the Web 2009, MiPOesias Companion 2012, Wigleaf, OCHO, Big Muddy, Literal Latté, LUMMOX 2012, BOXCAR Poetry Review Anthology 2, and Dogzplot Flash Fiction 2011. His latest poetry collection is Cinéma Vérité, published by A-Minor Press, 2013.

JAIME VALERO

Jaime Valero was born in Madrid, Spain on January 16, 1967. He showed his skill and interest for drawing and painting early on and completed a BA in Fine Arts at Complutense University in Madrid in 1985. He taught Art and Drawing for six years, and began his professional career as an artist in 1996. For the past 17 years, he has built a style and imagery focused on portraiture and the figure, and has also tried every other possible field. From 2001 to 2003 he lived in the U.S., where he investigated large-scale portraits and nudes in water in an effort to find new ways to express his most personal and particular obsessions. Over a year ago he started a new project through the Internet to freely share nonprofit processes and procedures with interested artists all over the world. To date, he has created five different videos in English and Spanish, the "Come In and Help Yourself Project," to open his studio and its secrets to the world. Last year he started a new and, so far, successful relationship with Rarity Gallery in Mikonos where he will be showing new work in April 2014.

REBECCA VENN

A transplanted southerner, Rebecca came to Wisconsin in 1991. The personal history of experience that is found in the human form fascinates her. The way light and shadow define strength, fragility, beauty and resilience is a never ending challenge and passion.

She considers herself self educated rather than self taught, as she has found artists whose work she admired and studied under them; ultimately she taught Life Studio at UW Parkside, and a variety of workshops at the Charles A. Wustum Museum in Racine, Wisconsin and The Clearing in Ellison Bay, Wisconsin .

Now self employed, she works in a variety of mediums to keep her eye fresh; she enjoys the risk that leaving her comfort zone provides. Through this variety of mediums she discovers something new each time. Sometimes it is with gritty marks of graphite or charcoal and other times with the lightness and delicacy of the form in colored pencil, or the risk and flow of watercolor; and sometimes the deliberate pace of oil painting.

Rebecca has won various awards, including First Place in the National Figurative Juried Exhibition in Woodstock, Illinois. Her artwork is in numerous private collections throughout the United States and abroad.

She is represented by Seebeck Gallery, Kenosha, Wisconsin, Delind Fine Art Gallery, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and The Norman Lasiter Gallery in Palm Springs, California.

GARRY VETRORI

Garry Vettori is a photographic artist living on the south side of Chicago. His work is concerned with people: their beauty, their stories, their mysteries, and their trials. Often surreal in style, he enjoys creating images that make people pause and think. He specializes in portraiture and is currently working on a children's book. His photography can be seen at www.arnhiem.com



www.poetsandartists.com

Publisher

Didi Menendez

Proofread by Timothy Brainard

Bloomington, IL

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Resurrection Mary

Mary glides out Resurrection's gates,
dress white as the crescent moon.
Her shoes drag bright sparks over
the rest of the sleeping dead.

The crows moan their blessings,
from tree limbs and telephone wires.
Church bells toll when she leaves—
a benediction for this brief respite.

*When I'm out walking
I see faces in the pavement
are you real, I ask,
or are you wavering, like me*

*Drivers at midnight
all go the wrong way
the road goes through me
there is no divide*

*Need a ride, they ask
I'm clearly ready for a party*

*↳ can dance in white satin
welcome to my nightclub*

*Moonlike I watch them
leg to leg in the car
I no longer have a home, I tell them
take me to the place with the gates*

Sunshine wasn't always a stranger.
Her hands weren't always like ice.
But his voice, so angry, she had to rush
out from the dance that cold winter night.

She still remembers those tail-lights,
the screech of tires as they left.
Only flowers in their wake to warm her,
weaved into red and blue wreaths.

*I wanted a bronze sunset
↳ a star's tear
for a diamond
but instead, it was death*

The Process

Diana Adams

Choosing a subject for Legend wasn't easy. Even though there are so many great legends, I kept coming up blank. At first Pris Campbell mentioned Ann Boleyn – I liked the idea, but I couldn't get anything down on paper. When Garry suggested Resurrection Mary, I agreed to it, mainly because after weeks of Googling legends I couldn't come up with anything that I felt I could work with. Also, I like ghosts – someone once gave me a compliment by saying that if I 'call spirits from the vasty deep, they will come'. There have been repeated sightings of Mary leaving Chicago's Resurrection Cemetery, wearing a white party dress. She hitch hikes a ride and wants to go to nightclubs. At first Mary's voice was no where to be heard. At this point Pris was already well on her way with the poem. I was feeling bad that I didn't have anything yet. Then, one day out in the back yard reading *Bon Appetit*, her voice, or what I thought was her voice, came to me in a four line stanza. I got out a pencil to catch the rest of my part of the poem.

Pris Campbell

Diana and I both played with approaches to the poem, liked both, and decided to write using both of our voices in separate stanzas. I like the interplay between 'Mary' being observed and also speaking. We then put the poem together and made suggestions about the overall poem until we had what we wanted.

Garry Vettori

When Pris, Diana, and I first discussed our project, we each nominated 3 persons, real or fictional, to choose our Legend from. We then voted on the choices, and arrived at a character out of Chicago's urban legend – Resurrection Mary, the spirit of a young girl who is said to haunt Resurrection Cemetery in Chicago's south suburbs. We also discussed how we each wanted to approach our chosen Legend. Since I often like to work in metaphors, I said that I wanted to see our subject as more than just herself, a symbol for some larger idea. The idea that she is a wandering spirit who is only seen by a select few and always asks those who see her for a ride, seemingly trying to get somewhere that she can never reach, always disappearing out of the cars she gets into: all of this suggested a connection to the homeless. They often go just as unseen, wandering sadly from place to place, and no one knows where they come from or where they go to when they disappear. The ghost of Mary seemed a fitting metaphor for the plight of our society's real wandering souls.

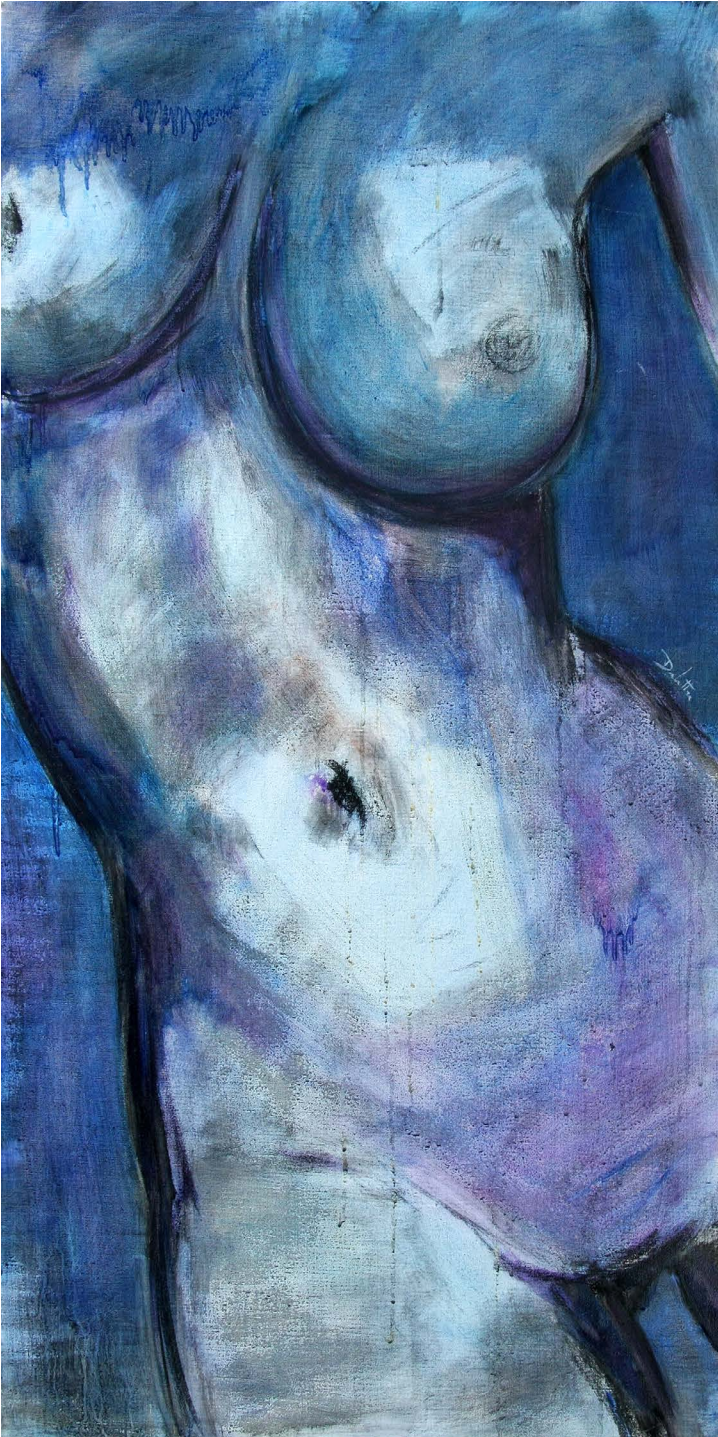
Poem by Ron Androla and Larry Lawrence

Blue Lady

a honeysuckle stingray
under the mud of blue paint
flutters cloudy water
as decades pass. she bursts
as sleek as a marlin
walking on startled ocean.
david's eyelash, chewing-gum,
sky, his mouth. a mounted trophy
above gilded mirrors
& top shelf liquor bottles
licks tranquility. imaginable,
rose-colored vulva lips smile.
ripped fish laugh like donkeys.
she cums on the wall,
on a moon-lit surface of memory.

Déhanché nocturne
oil on canvas 2010,
47.2" x 23.6 "

Painting by
Jean-Noël Delettre



The Process

Ron Androla

I thought the project was a failure, that Larry Lawrence and I had not been able to write a poem based on Jean-Noel Delettre's painting per a "Legends" theme for Ms. Menendez and her publishing empire. Larry had originally sent me a poem, which I then re-worked, but after showing both versions to my wife, Ann, whose critical eye I trust more than anyone, she simply sighed and said something about both versions being throw-aways and in fact ignorant to the fairer sex. I agreed. Jean-Noel's painting had not been done any justice by our words. I was close to giving up, but Larry and I continued to collaborate, to see if we could manage something worthy of the Art. I found a more vibrant nude Jean-Noel had recently created, & suggested to Larry we change our focus to this new painting. Jean-Noel nodded, and I think Larry and I have reached a poem together that stays true to the artwork & theme. I did not expect this collaboration to be such a challenge, but I am grateful to my comrades for the good fight.

Larry Lawrence

I was amazed at how challenging it was to complete this project. Writing a poem with someone you never met, about a painting created by an artist who resides in France. Of course, this could only be accomplished with the internet. We got to know each other through emails, Facebook messages, and collaborative writing.

Ron and I originally selected another of Jean-Noel's paintings. We sent many drafts back and forth and our ideas, phrases and imagery kept changing with each rewrite. We found ourselves far from what had originally captivated us both when we selected the artwork. Ron suggested using another one of Jean-Noel's paintings and it put us both on the same page again!

Writing with Ron made me begin to think differently about the elements of poetry. One message in particular left a strong impression, "A poem should have substance, big words that make the reader stop for a moment, words that want to be read for their surprise."

Michelle Buchanan *Marta* oil on canvas



Diva of the Desert

She sashays on stage like a male peacock
with her frayed feathered boa, her tarnished tiara,
and her promise to put on “one Hell of a show”
for an audience that isn’t there.

*“All right, here I go again. I know it’s crazy.
I even know I’m crazy. But crazy ain’t dead.”*

In the long gone past the borax miners showed up
(now and then) if only to escape the heat
and she gave it her all as she always did
whether there was someone to give it to or not

*“Those guys were as nutty as I am now.
Talk about a lousy job. They deserved
a little tits and ass and I was the best there was.”*

But that’s Marta, divine diva of the desert
She’s been performing her one-woman show
every Sunday at the Amargosa Opera House
just out of reach of 135 degree heat
at Death Valley Junction for half a century

ever since she got that flat
and there was no one to fix it

no one at all
for half a century.

*“There has to be a story to explain things,
even if the story doesn’t make a lot of sense.
I did get a flat and there was no one to fix it,
but when I looked around I knew I belonged here.”*

She struts the stage and sings her songs
and tells her tantalizing tales and recites her risqué
rhymes to no one in particular (or at all)
But there is that painted audience on the back wall
That audience that Marta (divine diva of the desert)
painted herself
That never-blinking, never thinking, constantly staring
well-dressed well-groomed painted crowd in acrylic
Those dolled-up dames and dapper Dans
fixed on a show they’ll never see
They are the “Ladies and Gentlemen” that Marta continuously refers to
when she breaks through that fourth wall
Some languish with lasting laughter
Others frozen forever watch in wide-eyed permanent awe

as she chews the scenery and performs her shrewd march
through history with her one-woman tour of emotional setbacks and
sawed-off show tunes

“The painted audience? It just helps to have somebody looking back at you on a bad night. No more delusional than the dreamer that called this dump an opera house. Everything is an illusion or a delusion. I’m like the guy who shovels up elephant shit in the circus and who, when they ask him why he doesn’t quit and get a better job says, ‘What, and give up show business?’ This is what I do. Somebody shows up, fine. Nobody shows, that’s okay. I’m a professional, I still go on.”

She started stuck in Stickville, not Booneville or Kennebunkport, where
sheep are always pregnant
and their kids are God-awful ugly
where they bet their paychecks and pink slips on
Saturday night snail fights
where they call the man in the moon “Billy”
where suicide is not illegal, it’s expected
where the dead are buried face down so they can see
where they’re going
but she broke out busted and bound for Broadway
and then fate took the wheel
and a legend she became
a progressive symbol of belief, an ardent suffragist

who took to task anyone who didn't recognize the gifts she gave.

“People think this place is bad they should see where I come from. I know how to deal with morons as good as anybody. And I can give as good as I get. Those miners whooin’ and hawin,’ yellin’ at me to come down from the stage and they’d show me somethin’. Shit. I had to teach them that what they were bellowing at was the best thing they would ever see. I may be a little beat up now but then even the cheap costumes couldn’t hide the fact that I was the real thing. I’m an artist and art is sex. Somebody said that.”

She was the toast of the town
which isn't really a town at all
but a misunderstood mistake (population: 3)
that even spirits want to leave
hitching rides on coattails and in back pockets
But not Marta, she made it her home
She dropped anchor in the burning sand
“This is where I broke down,” she says,
“And this is where I’ll stay”
where a kettle sings that it’s time for tea
and vultures circle overhead
where cacti reach as far as they can
and tumbleweeds roll from Hell to breakfast

here on the outskirts of sanity where her last husband
took off after a mirage and learned quickly
how Death Valley got its name
He became part of the scenery
like Marta, 90 miles from Vegas
30 from Pahrump
and 86 from Baker on the I-15

*“The wonder is not that I’m a crazy old broad out here
in the middle of nowhere. The wonder is that I’m not
crazier than I am. My poor husband (What was his name?)
took off after a mirage that he thought was me dancing
in the desert like a dust devil. He’s still out there, somewhere.”*

She’s the legend of the junction
where she twirls and whirls in her ballet slippers
with Broadway behind her and desert all around
She’s the biggest thing that ever hit here
except maybe the alien that crash-landed nearby in Area 51

*“Aliens! And they say I’m crazy. This whole country is alien.
Out here I’m not the strangest thing by a long shot.”*

She’ll tell you that it seems like only yesterday
when she looked through that hole in the door of the abandoned opera

house and saw her future
where floorboards creaked and cracked
and the ghost of a baby cried
where a stuffed and mounted coyote now howls at a paper moon in every
performance she gives
to an audience that almost always never shows.

*“Funny the eerie sounds the wind can make. Took me a while to find the spot
where it was blowing through a little gap in the shingles and crying like a
baby. I think the wind gets lonely.”*

She gives everything she’s got, takes her final bow,
blows her kisses to the painted patrons on the back wall,
and hurries across the stage the best she can
with cane in hand
where she presses “play” on the old tape recorder
and tears up from the applause,

*“It’s only the squares that don’t get it. Shakespeare got it.
‘We are such things as dreams are made on,’ that’s what he said.
So come on in, ladies and gentlemen, and have a seat,
you’re gonna see a hell of a show.”*

The Process

The Contributors

Collaboration usually denotes working together; in this case collaboration was the end product of independent interpretations of a concept and poem by Howard Camner, a painting based on the Camner poem by Michelle Buchanan, and still another interpretive poem by Jim Boring inside the Camner poem.

Sounds more complicated than it was. Camner's vision of the diva in the desert was the starting point and the theme of the collaboration. Buchanan envisioned the diva in her youth and the height of her beauty, although the hint of madness is in her eyes. Boring shifted the point of view to the diva's own voice, giving her a chance to represent herself – in effect, to collaborate with the rest of us.



Jaime Valero *Mama Was a Diva* mixed media 12x12".

A Diva Unlocks Her Secret

She lines her walls with the magazine covers:

her pout to open his kiss,
cheekbones that longed for his breath.

Harlem heydays, audiences staring,
dusted sunshine strutting
wrapped in an emerald sheath.

Each day she wakes to this frame:

her cinnamon skin, the curves of her body
fitted in green regalia.

Faded ink reveals his familiar loops—
her lover craved her touch.

In his favorite portrait she smiles coyly,

the once perfect canvas
full scarlet-tinted lips
and flawless skin.

Her withered fingertips
hold secrets beneath the surface.

Decades fall between them.

—*The kind of love that you desire
is the problem. You're like
trying to tune a harp.*

—*Don't ask me to play
in the rain or the sun
if looks are of no importance.*

Feathers pulled and scattered
cards addressed and never sent
a pair of darned socks.

Letters to remind her that when he died
she curtained her mirrors with velvet.

Now winter hangs from those hooks

yet she feels settled in her skin.

She unlocks her mahogany box
to find him. The world
leaves her alone.

Her jet-black ponytail pulled tight
falls down her back again.

The Process

JoAnn: In the beginning of this project I knew I wanted to honor a legendary Everywoman, a woman highly important to those around her, vital to all whom she nurtured, but who never received acknowledgement of her gifts. When I sat down to write I began to read an old book about musical instruments as a way of stalling. The chapter on the harp got me writing. I was fascinated by how beautiful this instrument is, how difficult to play, how understated its performance in an orchestra and how little known the harp is. I was hearing in my head the voice and music of a woman—someone alone in a room, someone remembering her life as both beautiful and harsh—through a collection beloved objects. I heard the voice was of an aging woman.

JP: Our collaboration process with Jaime was amazing. It was really a coming together of creative visions and ideas. After JoAnn wrote her poem, we tried to narrow down our Legend theme. Jaime asked me about my mother, Ruth King. She was a well-known African American runway model in Harlem during the 1940's and 1950's—who is now an aging Diva. I am working on a poetry video project that combines vintage photos of my mom during her Harlem heydays with my poetry as backdrop to the video. I shared a bit of the video project and some vintage pictures with JoAnn and Jaime. All three of us took off with my mother's story and photographs. I wrote a reply to JoAnn's initial draft integrating images of the aging Diva, vintage photos, portraits and old love letters into my poem.

JoAnn: JP sent me a narrative poem about a Diva remembering her runway Heydays. The challenge was to merge our poems – mine was highly lyrical with a disembodied voice, while JP's had a character describing her former life and lover. I used the alphabetize function to re-order the lines of JP's poem—making it into a “cut-up.” With the storyline broken, I could see the character in JP's more clearly—her longings

and where my poem's images and voices might fit in.

JP: JoAnn spearheaded that process, seeking feedback and input from me all along the way. This exchange went into our final draft, a merging of our poems and their images. Jaime used our blended poem and imagery to create his amazing reflections portrait, which meticulously captures the youthful Diva, and the aging one reflecting on the ever-evolving self. The artwork and the poem truly complement one another.

Jaime: The creation of this collaboration for PoetsArtists has certainly been a fantastic experience. I must say that I have had the gift of JP and JoAnn's magic poetry leading me all the time. They created a fantastic dialogue around the Diva, JP's mother's early days, aging, memories, old photographs, love letters... and all that led me to play with many evocative images from JP's mother and family. Suddenly I was working on this image, trying to connect with the two marvelous poems they had written. At some point I decided to invoke the Diva's days through a glass and its reflections. I have always loved reflections on water or glass. I think reflections create the sensation of "going through" the image and accessing a new and different world. In this case, reflections connect both portraits and take the entire image back to the days when she was a Diva and then later, when those days were past...This is the final piece; I hope it works.

Since there was no strict plan for what I was going to end up with, I used all kinds of media as I went along... starting with graphite and watercolor, adding colored pencils and fixer, and finally oil and dissolvent on paper glued to board. Mama Was a Diva measures 30x30cm/12x12".

The image shows the letters 'PA' in a large, light gray, serif font. The letters are positioned in the bottom right corner of the page. The 'P' is tall and has a thick vertical stem, while the 'A' is slightly shorter and also has a thick vertical stem. The letters are set against a plain white background.

Poem by Laurie Kolp and Grady Harp
Artwork by Hector Milia (Video and Audio)

Of the Sea and Legends and Echoes

Rise, rising from a seabed
through swirlings of foam and forks of light
from the distant sun that would dare breach
the dark of my kingdom. I, the mighty Neptune,
whipping my hippocampi to pull this chariot
away from rest, away from placid
undulating depths of my ocean throne
to answer a voice that ever escapes
my desires.

Anchor me in seaweed,
in tangles of sanguine hair.
Let Man-o-War squeeze all breath from me
with tentacles that won't let go,
but don't turn away
as if I'm nothing.
I struggle in currents,
circling plankton a wake
of wonderment.
Sea anemone bejewel the arms
I stream before your eyes,

but you fail to see
beyond the confines
of your throne
where you sit
alone.

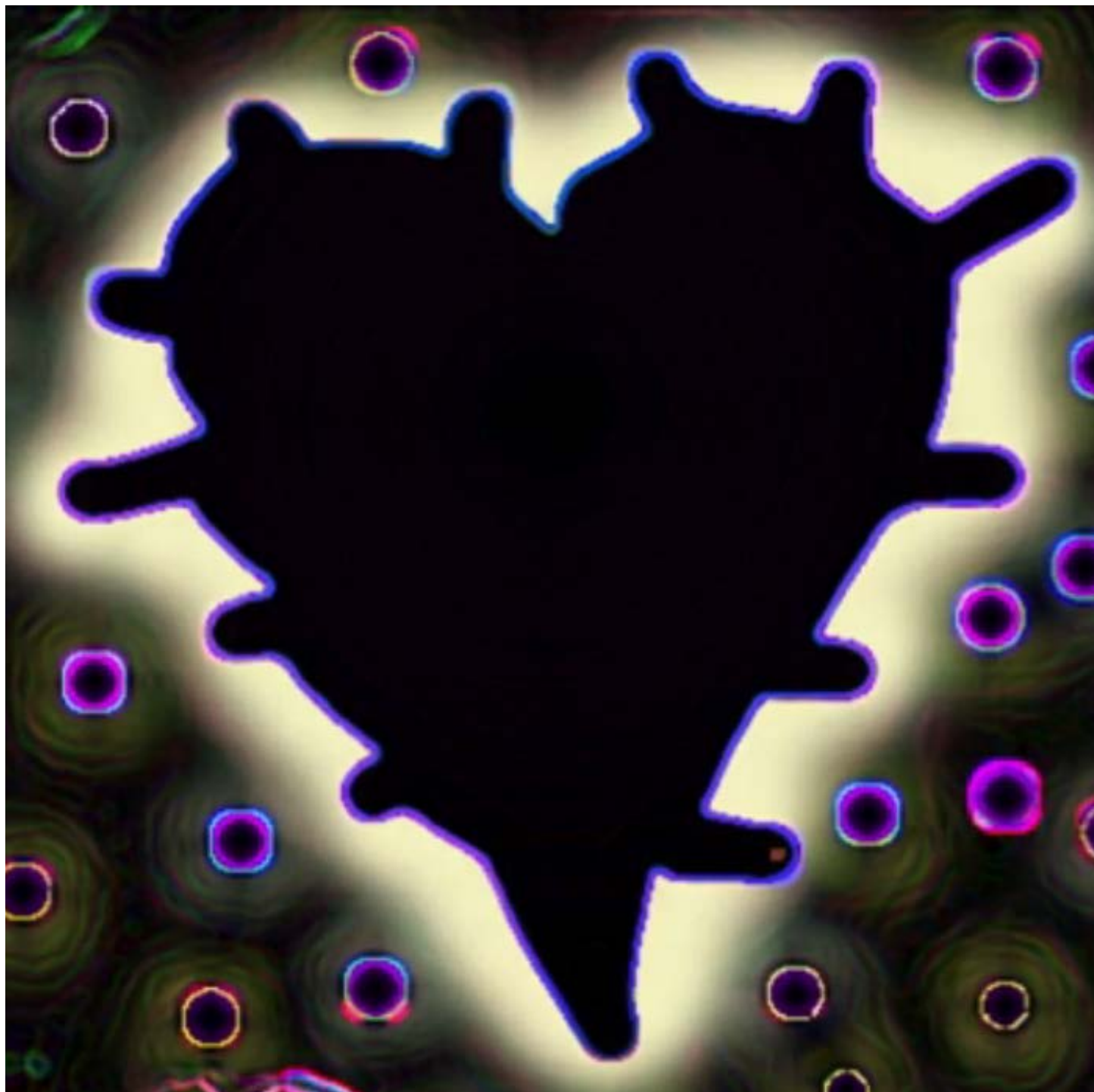
Sirens sing, seduce shipsmen to their lair.
I rise to reach for their perfect swimming bodies
....call her Undine, Rusalka, but call her
I try.
A god should have control,
but the heart of man
so longingly clogged in my breast
begs for the solace and the passion
that fails to cut the veil
of myths and legends.

Wreckage of what could be,
your consideration
the setting sun
I can't swim fast enough to catch
or jump high enough to reach.
Must I bathe before your chariot,
intoxicate you with splashing
bubbles of champagne?

She in her beauty and radiance
fails to sense a thought,
a god whose longings sink back
through the darkening foam of the sea,
alone.

Fury propels me to coral reefs
where I think of loving you.
I rally dolphins,
swim from shore to shore
drawing hearts in waves,
but still, I'm nothing
when you fail to see
beyond the confines
of your throne
where you sit
forlorn.

I try.
A god should have control,
and yet without her song
her breast and seething beauty
a myth perhaps?
Longing, a god
alone.







The Process

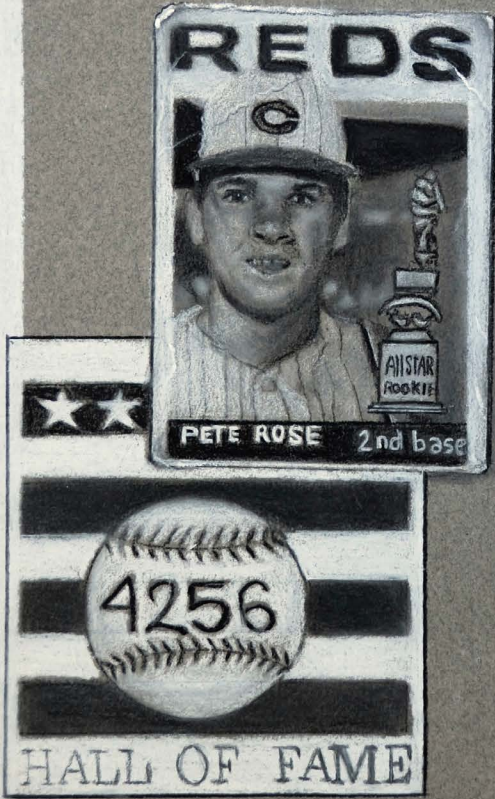
Laurie Kolp

When my original poetry partner dropped out of the project, I was so disappointed. Our “theme” had been decided upon, and I’d already started working on some ideas, as had our third person, Hector. Time went by and still no word of a replacement. In fact, our names had been taken down from the collaboration list. I finally asked Didi about it, and Grady was placed with us the next day. Grady and I contacted each other immediately, but we really didn’t know where to go from there. Hector wanted us to finish the poem first because he planned on using it to stimulate his artistic direction with the project. So I shared what I had with Grady, and he wrote his part. I edited and reworked my contribution and sent it to Grady, who wasn’t sure how to put it all together. I suggested alternating stanzas and Grady then separated them out, sent it back, and asked me how I liked it. Love is more like it... I loved it, and so did he. We were so excited and had finished our part in a relatively short period of time. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this project with Grady and Hector.

Grady Harp

Collaborative processes are always a challenge, especially when the project for collaboration is with fellow artists whose work is not familiar to you. For LEGENDS I dropped my hat into the ring as an interested potential participant and discovered I was to work as a filler – the poet who had been assigned to work with Laurie and Hector had dropped out. So I dropped in and was instantly drawn to the poetic nidus Laurie Kolp had initiated. What came across the ether was a beautifully liquid reimagining of the plight of the mermaid. Laurie’s love song to someone/something in her aqueous world brought to mind the figure of the men at sea – the Flying Dutchman, Captain Ahab, Thor Heyerdahl – but the concept of the collaboration was LEGENDS, and who best represents a legend of the sea than Neptune or Poseidon. Laurie’s poetry is musical, not unlike the voices of the sirens, the sea nymphs who lured sailors to their deaths with their seductive songs. But to avoid a poem of death, Neptune won, and my responses to Laurie’s fragments seemed to echo the longings of her sea creature. We rode the ether waves almost phrase by phrase, sensitive to each other’s stanzas, and the final poem was born – a conversation between passion and myth. How Hector will make this visible is yet to be seen, and there is the joy of collaboration!

Scott Kiche Legend Pete Rose 11x14 charcoal on paper



Nothing in this agreement shall deprive Peter Edward Rose of the rights under Major League Rule 15 (c) to apply for reinstatement

for Charlie Hustle

Life can't be this full of fried chicken, waffles
and dust. How many highway exit ramps
and cups of coffee and flashbulbs cracking
away in the stands, how much dust's enough dust
and how few stars men try to banish—

Dan Patrick: You can't show video?

Tim McCarver: We can't show video.
Major League Baseball does not like us
showing video of Pete Rose on our air
and from my understanding ESPN too, so—

Dan Patrick: What? Wait. Hold on—

Tim McCarver: Well, I agree.

Dan Patrick: But, Tim—

Tim McCarver: Why can't we?

Life can't be this full of dying gardens.
Or it can be. At every garden's gate
some dark eyed angel wields a forbidding sword
while every kid that was shoots cement craps
with Monopoly money, training
for the big leagues, Mr. Delmonico's vacant house
backsteps in autumn, year of the banishment. The year
of paper planes, spiders, tambourines
and fifty thousand more temporary things.
A rainbow for instance. What's a rainbow's deal?

The Cincinnati Reds are on the air.
The fun. The action. The excitement
of Major League Baseball with the Cincinnati Reds.
Brought to you by Bud Light, the light beer
with the first name in taste. Everything else
is just a light. By Toyota's exciting cars
and trucks for 1985. Toyota invites you
to see them at your Toyota dealer.

Oh, what a feeling. And by Long John Silver's
Sea Food Shops, now featuring new Ocean
Chef's Salad.

Hi, everybody. Welcome to Riverfront Stadium
where tonight a capacity crowd is expecting
Pete Rose to pick up hit number 4,192.
Along with Joe Morgan, I'm Ken Wilson
and we're glad to welcome you.
A little different atmosphere tonight, Joe.

The world was running out of atmosphere
and into fearless moments, like a lone sailor
must have when drunk, out of water, on a lifeboat
stocked with rum as the moon becomes
some beat up rock about to fall into the ocean.
Piss pot moon, dugout spittoon, flash
of light breaking the brown Cincinnati night.

It is, then and now, but must it always be September 11th
and everyone a passenger underway
to some blown apart tomorrow
where the stride and hustle goes start, goes finish, goes goes?

Well, I think there's a little less

tension in the air than there was last night.
I think the excitement will still be here
because it's an exciting event.

A lack of electricity compared to last night.

Like in every war zone, every last night
in every war zone. A lack of every last
night, like this world is our only war zone
like 1985 could just happen without phone
calls from some mom shoved down them stairs
the neighborhood shoots craps against. Is this
my world, his, yours, or ours? All these fast
fist tours of youth bring a punch to my eye.
Tear, dear God, I mean tear.

It's a big night in baseball history. We're here
set to go and we're glad you're with us
at Riverfront Stadium, Cincinnati.
Saxophone notes
and electronic keyboard. Cut to: commercial.

And the home of the brave.

If you have a lump in your throat,

you're only human, and it's two balls
one strike. Everybody on their feet
here in Cincinnati and a worldwide
television audience watching
these moments tonight
here at Riverfront Stadium.
2-1 pitch from Show.

Into left-center.

There it is. Rose
has eclipsed Cobb.

That's number 4,192.

Sound of fireworks, audience cheering.

For Pete Rose, this certainly is crowning achievement
and for baseball, a game that grows from its past,
and finds warmth in statistics, this is one of the all time
great moments.

Well, there is love aplenty here in Cincinnati,
and Eric Show becomes a spectator
as this city loves their native son.

And I think, Joe Morgan, you would agree
that from somewhere above tonight
Pete's dad has to be looking down with a big smile

on Cincinnati Riverfront Stadium
and his little son Petey. It has to be
a very approving smile from Pete Sr.

The moment we've all waited for:
hit number four thousand, one hundred
and ninety two that makes Pete Rose
the all-time Major League baseball hit leader.

It comes at 8:01 pm, eastern daylight time,
September eleventh 1985.

Let's all drink a toast to Pete Rose
the most prolific hitter in all of baseball
history. Pete, this Bud's for you.

Pete Rose is what baseball's all about.

The matter of Mr. Rose is now closed.
It will be debated and discussed.
Let no one think that it did not hurt baseball.
That hurt will pass, however, as the great glory
of the game asserts itself and a resilient institution
goes forward. Let it also be clear
that no individual is superior to the game.

Craps and the streetlights come on
calling the bastards, the bums, and doubters
into that dugout they live and die in.

The moon is punked by streetlights.
Any night begins to spin like this one.
There's bits of bone in the teeth
and the penny taste of blood behind
the eyes of any night, any day, any
come away who come what may.

We dream someday we are home
and it's the wrong home, the wrong
father breaking the kitchen table
and flipping it. We blink and the yarn
the cat loved burns so fast it's like
every fire demands forgetting.

We pay and the barked at moon
shrugs welcome home, traveler.

You dig, Charlie Hustle, you dig
the lost bones, you dig the pale bones
of a brontosaurus spine, man, you dig
up Cincinnati. Find the dark

part of any day and put it down.

Once, my friend Willi took my pulse
in a thunderstorm and decided
either I was dead and dreaming
or the world was murderous.

Once a flower broke open
in an ice storm and swarms
of bees gathered in the oven.
They never had it so warm.

It's any number of numbers.
It's dust and waffles.
It's coffee and institutional
assholes, everyday
on the menu now.

A rose by any other name
is already in the hall of fame.

Note:

This work contains excerpts of a transcription I made of the September 11th 1985 Reds vs. Padres game. During that game, Eric Show, who years later died in a rehab facility after using cocaine, heroin, and alcohol, gave up The Hit. I propose no causality between The Hit and Show's addictions. I mention it here only because during the research for this work, I realized that around any legend orbit hundreds of interesting mortals. This work also contains excerpts from Dan Patrick's radio show, and Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti's press conference on August 24th, 1989. Commissioner Giamatti would die of a heart attack at the young age of 51, 8 days after the press conference, while on vacation with his son, who we know as the actor Paul Giamatti. The last thing I should mention, for those less familiar with baseball, is that Charlie Hustle is Pete Rose's nickname.

The Process

Scott Kiche

The collaboration process for legends was quite simple and amazing that David and I found immediately an agreeable subject matter in the ex baseball player, Pete Rose. Through a few discussions we wanted to touch on the theme of the fallen hero. Growing up with baseball, David and I were huge fans of Mr. Rose. We found we had a mutual respect for the fallen player's skills and accomplishments. It was a treat being able to find such a quick and mutual subject to work with.

David Krump

The process worked well for me and Scott, despite losing our third contributor to other obligations. Once we settled on Pete Rose, we had a few discussions regarding our perceptions of him. In this way, Mr. Rose became our third contributor. It was, after all, his life we chose to examine.

Jennifer Koe *A Parting Gift* Digital photograph, double exposure



“Life, which you look for, you will never find” – The Epic of Gilgamesh

A monster? No. Nor an earlier

One rib, one tooth,

-the cartilage digs

Frankenstein, who saw the deep,

Here comes trouble:

-a doppelganger's double

She is woman, harlot, temple whore

Crocodile eyeteeth:

-clack, rumble

making jumping stew

a golem, taming man, in lion-skin.

Feeds sulfur infections laced with apples:

- to Eve

He dreams in sevens, an insomniac,

Around and around a boiling pot

limbless frogs

-are dancing fools

his rituals of fire cedar-scented.

Strumpet players red dust roll

- leaving trails of glittering lust

Fresh-baked bread is a seduction

Burnt breadcrumbs:

-they

she marks his skin with wine, a flood

Fallen caldrons:

-boil, bake

and sends for weed. Serpentine, she sheds

Second, third forth skins are peeled :

-revealing charming skeletons

wrapped in brown butcher paper

her skin and molds in clay a parting

They slip away

gift, for him, an epic song of home.

The spell is done:

we are one-

bone.

The Process

Rena Rossner

I have been drawn to the idea of Double Exposure poems ever since I studied under Greg Williamson, the inventor of the genre, at Johns Hopkins University. When Josephine and I found out we would be working with Jennifer Koe, a photographer, the idea of using that form for our collaboration - both in poetry and photography, started to make perfect sense. The challenge in working on this type of poem with someone else is to leave room for the other. To write a poem that stands on its own, but also leaves space for someone else. I anticipated the collaboration to be more difficult than it was, but Josephine's words meshed with mine seamlessly, and it was just a matter of a few tweaks before we felt it was done. I think Jennifer's image mirrors that process seamlessly, the merging of two images, two minds, and then an added third, a more perfect whole.

Josephine Lipuma

Rena Rossner, Jennifer Koe and I tagged-teamed a theme loosely based on the Giglamesh Legend, and "Double Exposure" poetry form. The poem was based on a free exchange of research and development context: the temple whore, harlot goddess, paradise lust lost and found, bubbling with creativity stew, oh what a collaborative feast! The word marriage between Rena and I, plus the elegant figurative photography of Jennifer Koe created finely intertwined words plus imagery=storytelling at it's best.

Jennifer Koe

The premise for this collaboration was based on the legend of Giglamesh and the idea of double exposure. Rena wrote part of the poem in which I based the first image. The second image was based off Josephine's response to Rena. The final piece is thus a blending of these two images in response to the poem.



Brian Busch *E1* pastel on paper

Newton and Einstein: A Discourse

Worms drill holes in the fruit of a tree.
Fruit breaks off and free falls into open hands
as mind progresses from cloth to tapestry.

Blitzing atoms breeze, all angle align,
dark crests conjure in this wave-particle sea.
A thought experiment for your voyaging mind.

Are you much more than a drinker's age?
New math swam like a beast in that blood
when Cambridge kept inertia safe in my cage.

I cut my teeth on your mechanical man-
every member of that harmonic set.
But the monster ruled before numbers began.

The fire was within me; I was aghast every night
mixing ink in my tea, through sun and through wax.
But where's a legend in the telescope's sight?

You can't discern it, down low on that seat.
The old grow young and fields wear thin-
these ambient forces diverge and retreat.

This one-song tastes stale, packed tight in equation;
your ideas clarify and expound like a god.
Time calls for salve on this spacial abrasion.

And space bleeds free into this open lesion.
The cat is now out, the strings unwind,
split and splayed from rhyme and reason.

Rise up to the heavens once you feel ready.
The old nebulae are still far away. But the earth
keeps to its path, slow and steady.

To know God's thoughts- the rest is detail.
So take my cortex, its muddle-matter,
all quark and quantum and mystic contrail.

The Process

Edward Nudelman

I enjoyed this mutual foray into a surrealist dialogue between Newton and Einstein. I lobbied hard for Einstein's protagonist, and won out only after paying off Joshua a couple hundred dollars. But I got the last laugh on account of inflation and the insulating effects of relativity. Joshua was great to work with and we kind of hammered this one out with many, many drafts, trying to let the poem take us prisoner. As you can see, Einstein and Newton were the clear winners.

Joshua Gray

The three of us decided the poem would come first and the art would be a response of the poem. Edward Nudelman and I liked the idea of a dialogue, a back-and-forth between characters. We decided upon a conversation between Sir Issac Newton and Albert Einstein. Einstein admired the work of Newton, but his 20th Century theories questioned Newton's.

Edward took the part of Einstein and I took the part of Newton. Initial drafts of the poem took on a confrontational mood, but the final draft was one more of respect for each other.

Edward and I wanted to get this poem right, listening to the details of word choice with regard to prosody and rhythm.





Angela Hardy *Tethered* acrylic 18X36"

DA

N. poeticus

by Samuel Peralta

It started with your voice, your shimmering breath
spiraling downward through the water's depth -

calling - so strange! - my name. I rose, undreamed,
and came to you. Across that space it seemed

the world unfolded of itself, a findern
flower, pheasant's eye, the unfilled cistern

of your heart. Then I came upon you, lost,
pitiful - until you saw me there, ghost

of your ghost, shade of your shade, reflection
of your longing. You bent to me, passion

finding mirrored passion, the gloaming coal
of mouth, of lips, of whispered betrothal.

Tethered, as a fevered dowry, to this
our conjugated sin, we pledged our kiss.

As Pitiful Dowry

by Steve Brightman

It started with the words, laid cool at her feet,
before she knew the weight they would carry.

The world fawned, fell upon bended knee,
unfolded the whole of itself as pitiful dowry.

So this was the weight that she would know.
This was her anchor, never knowing want.

Until she heard her voice in another, echoed.
Then she came upon shore, unleashed thirst.

Then she came upon skin, untied desire;
handprint shimmer and the downward drown.

The Process

Contributors

Narcissus - youth, reflection, flower - is the legend and thematic basis of the triptych composed of “Tethered” by Angela Hardy, “As Pitiful Dowry” by Steve Brightman, and “N. poeticus” by Samuel Peralta. Angela’s startling preliminary painting - two female lovers mirroring each other with an aquamarine iconography - springboarded an online discussion, with Steve undertaking to write a piece from the perspective of the Narcissus figure, and Sam the point of view of the watery reflection. The three shared intermediate drafts, exchanged symbologies and imagistic concepts - picking up echoes from each other’s work as each progressed to culmination. This concert birthed a triplet of individual art pieces that move and reflect each other seamlessly, each piece as much in sensuous union as the characters of the myth.

Master of Two Worlds

1.

His eyes golden and raised
toward some unknown truth,
some moment that holds him—

he moves by not moving—
wu wei—a hummingbird
in red blooms outside my

kitchen window, his wings
a blur of want, his head
the perfect constant gift.

2.

I've been this man's stutter,
his ache and his flutter—
these thoughts that can only

be mine, the way they move
over water and are
the water, I wander

without once wandering
because of my wonder:
his eyes have grown tender.



Blue Monday

Painting by Judith Peck

14x11 inches oil and plaster on board

Poem by Sam Rasnake and

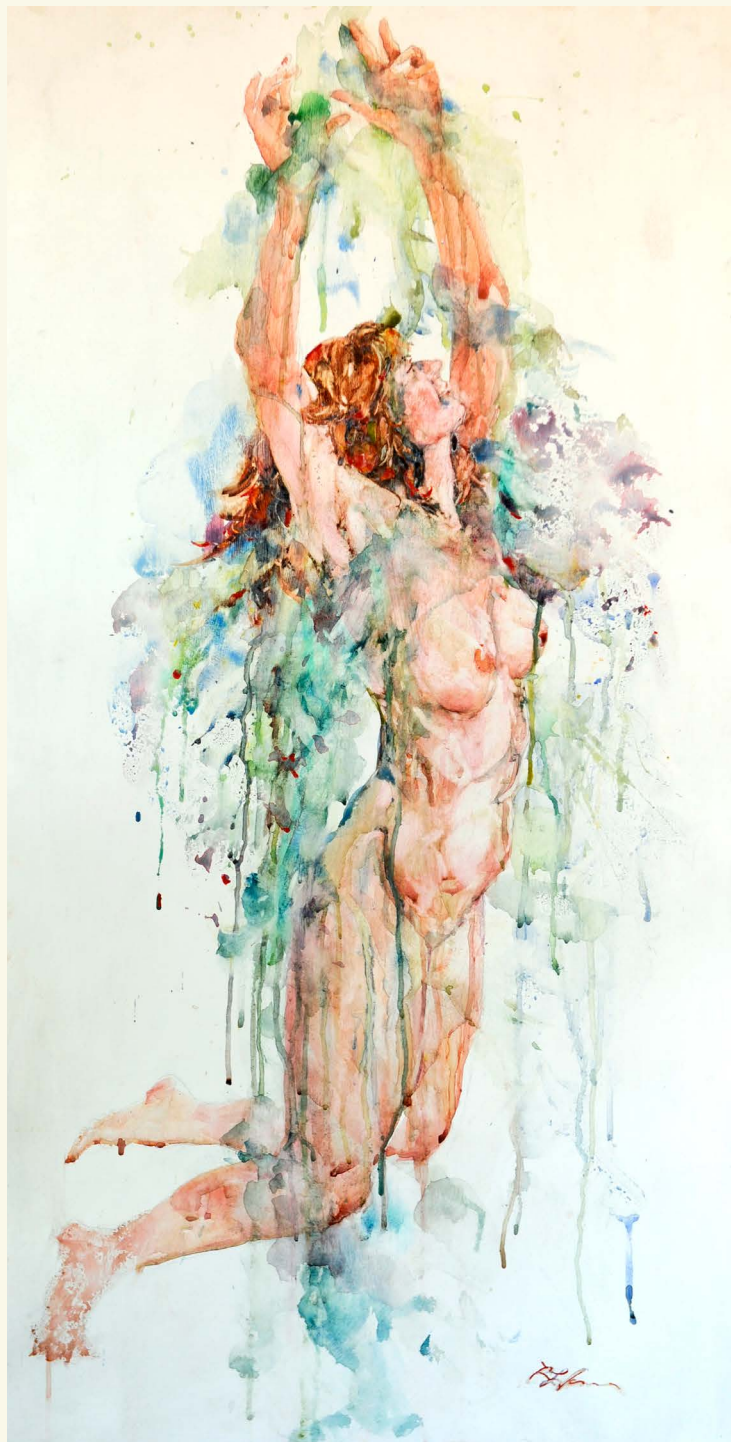
Robert Lee Brewer

The Process

Contributors Notes

After introductions, we decided to head down the path of Joseph Campbell and his work on myths. Our next decision was whether to do words first, art first, or both completely separate. We went the art first route. Judith painted her “Blue Monday” portrait. Sam took the first stab at a poem draft (using one of Robert’s previous poems as a loose model). Then, Robert came in with some suggestions for the end. After each step, we all provided input and encouragement to each other. For the final step, we circled back to where we began in choosing the title, which is one of the 17 stages of Campbell’s monomyth structure.

Rebecca Venn
Mermaid Rising
Watercolor on paper



DA

THE LEGEND IS NOT THE SUBJECT, BUT THE WAY SHE MOVES THROUGH TIME

of course you want to see it in
all the usual places

the glint of an eye, the curve of
her lips, a flicker of

some animal necessity - anger
maybe, or resolve.

instead you're left to marvel at this
single fluid motion &

her nakedness. the peril of exposure,
or regret. in the end,

it's the direction that confuses you:
all is reaching upward

in a world that's slave to weight.
and sloth. and gravity.

moving through it as she does
becomes the haze.

so you struggle for a hint of this
escape - a secret

somehow lost to those who look.
held captive under

pressures growing strong enough
to kill & still she rises,

rises, rises. now you watch it with
the roar of every

instinct in your chest: this animal
necessity, the burn.

The Process

Timothy Brainard

1) It is one month before the deadline. Rebecca completes her artwork. It is magnificent. I am drawn to it as though it were my own. I attempt to match its beauty with my words, but they fall short.

2) I am shrouded in darkness. Adorned in the fabric of it. Sunken to the core of it. Midnight all around. There is only just one truth and it weighs heavy as a stone. Heavier.

3) I fight against frustration like a plague. The artwork in her freedom taunts me daily. How she mocks me with her careless stretching limbs. She is free, alive, and naked; I am lost.

4) I admit it: I have nothing left to give.

5) It is one week before the deadline. I contact Rebecca. I contact our editor. I apologize for letting them down. I shrink into the corners of my room, into the silence.

6) They come to me at once, the words I'd searched for all along. It is two days from our deadline. The poem is complete in just one hour.

7) I share it with Rebecca. She approves. And here we are. We made it, shaking seaweed from our hair.

Rebecca Venn

The process is not always easy. It is called Art WORK and we did work. Each in our own spaces... far away yet connected in this journey. Initially all was enthusiasm but when pen was put to paper and brush to paint it was a challenge neither of us expected. My idea did not fall into place quickly. Long nights, afternoons and spurts of ideas flowed like the water and stalled like impenetrable walls. Paint exploded in delight, wiped out in frustration and finally fell into all the strokes that were needed.

I was excited to see what my collaborator would do. I was a little afraid, although I have admired his talent for quite a while, but would he be able to understand that she was more than a legend? To me she was real. It was difficult and we both gave up, but suddenly my message box was filled with an outpouring of such beauty as his poetry painted with words and insight that wove itself into and out of my painting.

www.poetsandartists.com