

Poems from the 2009 *Art and Poetry* Program



Tenth Street Studio of William Merritt Chase, 1894, Reynolds Beal

The Tenth Street Studio of William Merritt Chase 1894

by Maria Keane

Reynolds Beal paints
quietude;
an artist's studio resonates
a passionate palette.
He captures images of
lavish furniture,
an oriental carpet and
exotic musical instruments.
This, his tribute to
a great master,
his mentor,
William Merritt Chase.

Imagine the artist's brush.
It captures light and shadow,
the chiaroscuro of
randomly placed objects:
a model of a ship-
did Chase share his reverie of
an earlier dream-
a schooner in full sail?

I linger
in the chair
of the great master and
observe these vivid patterns:
color patches of paint
in his private world, a collage of
parasols, tapestries, drapes and
one silken couch that
covets memory of
a model's languid pose.

These trappings tease
the artistic palette.
Lush colors bathe the room

in evening light.
This salon once welcomed
the literati of New York.
With utter reluctance,
Chase closed his studio and
auctioned its contents.

I, too, hesitate to withdraw.
I bathe in
this painting's light.
A shimmer remains
in the preferred corner of the studio,
where models posed and personalities
shaped in paint
breathed life.



***The Elder's Daughter*, John Rogers, 1820-1904, after his original of 1886**

The Elder's Daughter
by Abby Millager , Newark, DE

Not everyone knows
how at apple picking time
when the whole village sets to,

beyond beebalm, duck
and cricket ruckus,
fresh cut hay, honeying sun—

beyond the God-scene,
where thick red stalks—cohosh,
its purple-black berries—

bend over the track, slick
with mud and fallen fruit
crawling back to its origins

in corners of the orchard so low
no respectable horse
or cart will chance them,

some trees, left barren
by the long shade of forest oaks,
console themselves

by bundling lovers
in rumpled pennyroyal
beneath declining boughs.



***Autumn Landscape*, 1900, John Francis Murphy**

***Indian Dancer*, 1935, Frank E. Schoonover**

***Delaware River in Winter*, ca. 1920, Walter Elmer Schofield**

American Art at the Biggs
by Tina L. Riley

Each week I come to this place in the center of town
I wander up, down, and all around
Then I sit sulking with my face frowned

Because after pondering what I see
There are no reflections here of me
Not even painted images of strange fruit on a tree

Perhaps I am behind the mask—where many say I belong
A closer look reveals my Indian cousin dancing to a song
So it's not me—I was mistaken—I was wrong!

I've known rivers more ancient than this
Yet I am not in these scenes, something is amiss
It is as if hues of brown didn't exist

I too, sing the American dream
"I am right here!" from behind the walls the ancestors scream
Yet, I remain absent from these scenes—*so it seems*

Perhaps there is no face here that resembles mine,
But I have been here all the time

For no artist can deny what I am
I am the tree
I am the mask
I am the river
I am the American Dream
I AM art.



Loading the Hay in the Meadow, ca. 1910, Frank F. English

haying time
by e.jean lanyon

make haste
rain is on the way
the farmer lives by seasons
tasting each with sweat
reads sky signs
feels the changing air
knows the time of each task

when sky begins to darken
and clouds hang in the distance
hasten
it is time to bring in the hay

the day is long
cut and gather slender stalks
draw the wagon closer
lift and pitch
lift and pitch
each load seems heavier
than the last

arms beyond ache
give in to rhythms
at one with action
higher and higher
atop the wagon

patiently
the horses wait
for signal that their burden
must be drawn
across the long field

make haste
rain is on the way



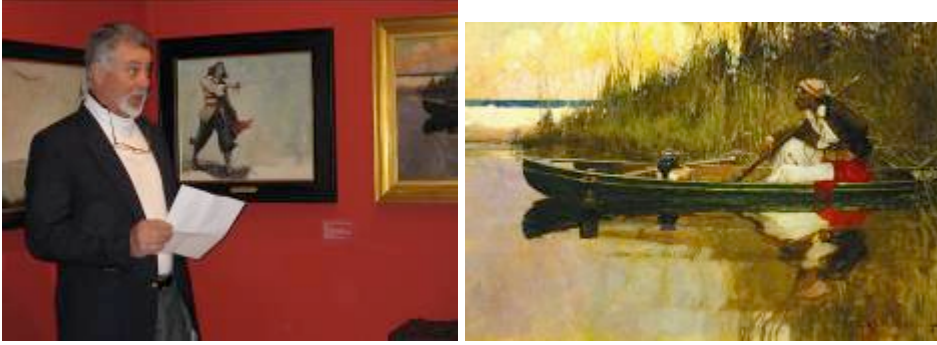
Berry Scoop, 1851-1866, Ziba Ferris

In The Time of Fireflies
by Mary Pauer

Please tell me of that May
it was cold I recall
women picked chilblains instead of fruit
and chewed sticks
and tore their petticoats,
yes that it was May.
Grandma's spoon slapped pandowdy
and bottoms astray
and stirred washday blues,
it was that May.
Wild strawberries nestled three to a stem.
Please tell me of that May.

Ziba Ferris begot an upturned berry scoop.
Two point five ounce troy,
tendrils askew bask in
repouss'e silver dew
to serve fraises tame
meadow straws wild,
rasps, tart to the heart,
bellicose blacks and blues,
boysens too.

Argentite, horn ore, red silver ore
cross-peened on a stake
planished to a sheen,
swage blocked and embossed
culled from arid tablelands for
fleshy fruit in laps of luxury.



***The Pirate*, 1911, Frank E. Schoonover**

The Pirate
by Jim Ranieri

Hiding, ever watchful among the concealing reeds, pushing boredom aside as the hours creep by. Hiding upon the calm waters, alert for the first signs of unfurled sails, his eagerness ebbs and flows, like the endless tides he knows intimately, must know, for they are entwined in his life with their subtle movements.

He has cast his lot with like kind, shunning honest toil for a life of....of what? He no longer contemplates this, but accepts it without consideration. For it, like his soul, has been cast upon the waters of fate, always waiting, always watching.

The spoils he garners gratify him, but like abandoned potential, are quickly squandered, until once again, he rides high upon the waves, striking terror into the hearts of honest seamen.

And so he waits, the red sash favored by his kind draped about his middle like the blood spilled by his musket and saber upon the decks of captured ships, turned dull by the crashing waves of sea and death.

His dark coat, stripped from the body of a long forgotten captain, keeps him warm, its gold buttons now dull and dirty. His musket leans against him, its polished barrel kept away from the corroding waters below. His eyes scan the horizon.... he waits.



The Pines—Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, 1957
Ethel Penewill Brown Leach

Once in a Blue Moon
by JoAnn Balingit

Loud though the train may be, its passengers needle thoughtfully, their thumbs whirring over Blackberries, their heads slowly setting, some with shiny crescent moons lodged in their ears. For once in a Bluetooth...For once in a blue moon.

Phases of the moon sounds gentle, gently blue, though I learned the phrase *blue moon* from my angry mother. It was once when the baby's overripe face burst tears, heaped in its camp cot blankets by the fire. My doing, all mine—I tried to pacify her mooning lips. *For once in a blue moon, she's sleeping!* Why did I have to go and wake her up? The baby jumped over the moon, fat blue, all the time mooing like a pained cow.

For once in a blue moon, little did I know, was a phrase for love. A phrase for when the waves were high enough to drown us all. And at the edges of our campsite, we could see the forest—but we could also see the trees. It made sense the moon should be blue, having sucked up sky to leave blackness.

At the heart of the moon, your mother stirred the fire with a branch. Up rose clouds of pungent mobs, their pitchforks poking heaven. As for the moon, she stepped catlike aside. She sipped the sea, as if her bright fur were not blue enough.

For once it was summer but too early for blackberries: they were bitter, vermillion. She showed us a path around a low dune, up the sand road through drowsy pines into a chapel of pin oak, where smoky blueberries sank into the pale seas of our palms. Somewhere in the distance, a freight train wailed like a baby. But the moon murmured softly, *There, there now, don't be blue.*



Delaware River in Winter, ca. 1920
Walter Elmer Schofield

Insomnia
by Maggie Rowe

how heavy the pull of sleep seems now
while hidden clocks are sucking at the dark
and python sheets,
sensing a soft throat, close in

beyond these thin walls
bleached winter streets
wait, silent
for the shocking wail of the early train

and though, in distant buildings,
others toss too, and fret
I can only think of the lucky ones
and their dogs, padded down

while my solitary, thundering body
races by apocalyptic rivers desolate and chill
on bleak rails through empty iron fields
into the ghost mouths of towns, screaming



***Heavy Surf*, 1915, Frederic Judd Waugh**

Love Dance
by Guillermo Silveira

You may be the greatest love I know
Since each day I think of you...

To taste our skin with biting lips
It does to me the same to you.
Sights with stronger sound prevail
You are to me as I'm to you.

A third person is to us
Like a moon is to the sun
You're the earth if I shine bright
You are the sun when I'm around.

Cuddly both of us always enjoy
To be inside each other's dream,
And if some times we need support
It's our strength that brings us close.

"One in a million," yes we know,
Is the one that shares the most.
What a gift to be like this
You and I, or you and me.

If one day life takes one of us
Since none else will be the one
To hold the other by the heart
It will be time to strike the rest
And to archive our love on earth
To tell the others what it means
To be the only one to share life with
The most intensive human verb:

Love, amore, amour,

amar, in love...



Stove plate, 1742

“Stove plate 1792”
by Hannah McLennan

**In iron they wait
He and she and ribbons black
He prays, she kneels. Two.**



Emmeline Beach, 1881, Abbot H. Thayer

The Book
by Charlotte McBride

The book she holds bears witness
To long ago promises and
faded dreams.

Broken pieces of the fragile thing
Called love in her life
bound only by leather.

Memories cascade like a waterfall
through time.
With each page another shimmering droplet.

A far away look carries her willingly
to those moments.
The sentinel now weightless in her hands
Grounds her, as the magnolia scented promises
Gently flow.



Summer Girl, 1899, Robert Reid

Things Unseen

by Toni Cooper

Gentle Spirit -

You move among us, clandestinely,
leaving your signature pressed
upon the cooling branches of the trees.

On the air, jasmine and honeysuckle raid her senses,
as a calming wind softly strokes her skin.

From afar, an absent songbird's urgent plea
finds a lover's ear. And somewhere deep
beneath her sandaled feet, seedpods sprout,
long and slender earthworms till the soil,
and around some distant, twisting curve, life
in a quiet, shady pond proliferate.

Breathe deeply now, if you will, as
exhaust fumes, jasmine, and after-shave
concoct a strong and rousing potion.

Feel the searing warmth

when hands clutch hands -

when lips meet lips

in a moist and lingering kiss.

And afterward, in the quiet time, as

sun prods her flaming orb
toward the sea, moments merge
and weary time collapses onto itself.
It is within this afterglow
that Love's embers smolder;
It is here where Life begins.



Horseshoe Falls, Niagara, 1866, James Hamilton

Witness
by Gary Hanna

The shear tonnage of this massive
cataract free falling, pounding,
like the hammer of some unmatched
giant pommeling the gorge below,
dwarfs even the dark purple storm
closing in on the eastern horizon,
its towering cumulus thunderheads
bringing more ammunition for the river.
Hints of civilization in the backlit
sky, caught in the middle, seem too
small to matter against the blue Niagara.
A solitary figure, bent shouldered,
peers over precipice, contemplating
the cataclysmic roar of the cauldron
below, the noise blotting out his senses,
quaking the ground, as mists boil up,
like the exhaling breath of a dying
world, wondering what he'll do,
when the earth opens up, swallows
us all.



Horseshoe Falls, Niagara, 1866, James Hamilton

Women Are From Venus, Men...
by Frank Minni

She senses all the beauty,
feels soft droplets tickle
her hair, caress her face.
She turns the roar of fallen
water into a lullaby, rests
her cheek on the broad part
of my arm, reaches to hold
my hand, squeezes it as she
describes aquamarine blue
peek through a veil of
white spray. I squeeze her
hand back, not as a reaction
to scenic splendor, but
as a response to the continuous
flow of falls and its
force on my bladder as I
squint in search of a loo.



Narcissus, Jan Zandhuis

Narcissus
by Betsey Farlow

Two noses.
No eyes.
Bird brain.
I have to say
I'm not sure I understand you.

Furry black rump.
Spine like a mountain stream – dark blue, dappled deep.
Tiny, shiny, circus-clown hat.
I have to say
I don't quite like you.

Sometimes,
When I'm in the midst of daily tasks,
You come to mind.
I have to say
I can't stop thinking about you.

Who was Narcissus, really?
A handsome youth trapped by his own beauty?
Or
A slug-footed, blind monster?
I have to say
I don't want to see you in my dreams.

I have to say
You
Must be
Art.