

2011 Art & Poetry Program

Hollyhocks

After *Hollyhocks* by John Ross Key

She is a tiny tipsy thing among
the blooms. I could call her Flora, but she
would not answer. I tell her do not pick
so many; others last longer than some,

and some do not last at all. She is three—
a spry pixie, bright eyes and petal skinned,
humming to herself. She flits from flower
to flower moving just within my reach

until a stand of hollyhocks halts her.
I must hold her up to reach the top ones.
So pretty, she whispers, the ones up high.
They are little like me but touch the sky.

The beauty of the flower, I begin
attracts some butterflies and always bees.
They feast on nectar or pollen, you see.
Flowers are fertilized this way within.

Am I beautiful, she asks, like a flower?
But I am too slow; sun catches her hair,
and now she shifts above these thorny stems.
These arms to protect, a fleeting power.

Michael Blaine

Brooklyn Bridge, East River Memorial

After *View of the East River with Brooklyn Bridge* by Arthur William Woelfe

Mr. Barnum tested stresses of this bridge
with a herd of twenty-one elephants.
He paraded them across the span.
Circus modality does not erase
the loss of immigrant workers,
who guaranteed its strength.



They dedicated sinew and skill,
experienced death before communion,
martyrs of construction.
The Roebling bridge,
a dream, was realized.
A steel cabled giant
bridged two boroughs.
Before this, ice threatened
ferries in the crossing.

When construction commenced:
cables snapped, derricks failed.
Sacrifice and death claimed heavy ransom.
Immigrant workers
forged skills to completion:
sister borough Brooklyn was realized.

Years before water cradled
immigrants in this bay.
They pursued *their* dream.
Merchants and tillers
swelled the Battery,
where Manhattan
shaped fortunes.

The artist illustrates Bridge, River,
tugboats and steamers,
energizing the River with
fast brush and rushing traffic.

Color and steel
secure his canvas with
suspension cables --
towering arches
loom like a gothic cathedral.

Its transept
conquers traffic on the span,
welcoming every age
to test its mesh of cables:
a memorial of
strength and beauty.

maria Keane

Summer Faded

After *Summer Girl* by Robert Reid

Perched on the porch's rail,
straw hat cocked, one sleeve
rolled in casual defiance,
she watches him wave
from his father's yellow REO
convertible. He tried
to play me, that Yalie
with high chin and
sharp nose. That Yalie
who could act dressed up
in belted tweed swimsuit
and towel draped over
a sleeveless shirt. Tried
to take me as his toy
he did. I gave him enough,
just enough to make him suffer,
just enough to make him
want more...next summer
when I'll be gone.



Frank Minni

Like Helping Hands

After *Marsh Landscape* by Edward Moran

What is it about lily pads,
they seem so stable, so
inviting, like stepping stones
to mysterious lands.
Can you curl up on them,
enjoy the sun, like leprechauns
or frogs, will they take us to
safety across the water,
are they what Moses used, or
are they the first miscalculation,
marking the edge, where the
swamp beckons, beguiling
in its private world, luring
you on, to unimagined beauty,

a nether land, that has no land,
where feet sink, and disappear,
while the surface covers over
your mistake, like starting
a relationship, when you
know better, but can't resist.

Gary Hanna

The Sitter

After Portrait of a Woman by Robert Street

We discover her from the left,
elegantly demure she
invites us to kiss her.

Yes, she is from that
city in Pennsylvania,
by the Delaware River;
where the Declaration
of Independence and the
Constitution were signed.

Her gorgeous eyes knew
that she was living in one
of the first thirteen colonies.

But her mind couldn't imagine
Benjamin Franklin's bridge,
our telecommunication,
her country's military expansionism,
an American jumping on the moon,
fast food, drugs abuse, abortion clinics,
nuclear weapons, world pollution,
human rights, or electric chairs.

As we face her, due to a light,
all of the sudden the canvas
cracks her, destroys her,
giving us the impulse to
admire her from the right,
until her smile caresses
her fractalized beauty
with brotherly love.

We can only see her from right or left,
because she will never face us.

Perhaps listening to good chamber music,
calm, not upset that her name is forgotten,
she is there, monolithic, just sitting pretty.

Guillermo Silveira