

Marisa Moks-Unger

From "Our Favorites" Chapbook
Poets' Hall Press, Erie, Pennsylvania

Until

It was not until the girls grew up
drew henna lines on their hands
pierced their bellybuttons, dyed their hair and
left home for art school, trade school, and beyond
that I knew that steel drums
made your favorite symphonic sound.
And the calypso band playing in the park
Left you sinking, satisfied, into your camp chair.

Until then it hadn't dawned on me
that American Picker was not a show,
but a religious experience for you.
Or waking up in the middle of the night,
softly sighing at your advances would
make you tremble like a teen's first time.

Until we had the mother-of-all
garage sales, I didn't realize that
simple things like a dog-eared animal match up game
would make you misty eyed and nod knowingly.
Until I took the heartbeat to notice
the blades of green grass shooting up
behind your words, words growing even now,
did I really get to know and appreciate you.

Marisa Moks-Unger

From "Voices of Lake Erie"
Gannon University Press, Erie, Pennsylvania

Date Night at Bertrand's Bistro on North Park Row

Because we have never been here before as a couple,
we choose to come sample the crepes for dessert.
He chooses something *tres American* that resembles
a Snickers bar with lots of extra whip cream and sprinkles.
I go for traditional *crepe citron* and bask in its tanginess.
We both get bottled water instead of champagne.

I tell him stories about living in the 15th district of Paris.
He tilts his head a bit – and I recall buying *la braguette*
at a French bakery – acting as if this is the first time
he's heard me ask for a man's fly instead of *baguettes*.
And he acts shocked that the baker kissed me and sent
me on my way without collecting *cinq centimes*.

Here at the table on the sidewalk across from Perry Square
we people watch and smile knowingly to one another.
A group of boys on skateboards cruise up and down
the curb of the street. An elderly couple rest on a bench
near the gazebo. He takes her hand and they sit silently.
Stillness, I note, is earned with age. And we're aging gracefully.

Marisa Moks-Unger

From "Totem Literary Review"
Gannon University Press, Erie, Pennsylvania

At The Station for the Spiritually Declining

At the station for the spiritually declining
The service is highly regarded by all for
Its keep'em-right-on-track efficiency:
Elitists eager to evaporate for dinner at 8;
Suburban snobs who're season ticket holders;
Traylor-park trash toting tots in tandem.

The meal's as bland as the mechanical riders'
Blank faces (without passion) stretched across
Heads fashioned with precision bobs or goatees,
Or French-twists held with chopsticks. Some're
Pony-O gals with guys sporting two-day's stubble.
All aboard for dull weekly tunnel-visioned praise.

When the train begins, a Gucci-loafered couple
Quickly exits out the caboose while others
Swerve into six revolving lines. Yawning,
Most intend to stiff the Host: Free fast food
Not a hand out, but received in cupped hands.
It's a sacrificed hour at dusk for a fetid farce.

The meal's winding down when the patrons
Receive their bill. Some accept it with a nod.
Adjusting coats, others show their back to the
Conductor and hurriedly careen to the door with
Their heads bowed (In reverence? In shame?)
Children chug: "ON-ward, Chriss-chan soulll-jerrrs...".

Marisa Moks-Unger

Unpublished
From Family Photograph

Another Ariel

She sits swimmingly poolside
gazes at my brother-in-law,
the photographer.
Bangs needing trimmed.
Her blond locks swept back in
a high ponytail.
Foot curled in anticipation,
she's in her mermaid pose wearing
stunning pink plastic heart frames.
A small shy smile curls on her lips.
Perhaps saying the end of "cheese"?
Perhaps the smell of chlorine causes
her nose to wrinkle?
Perhaps she's trying to figure out
her place in the ocean with
her infant sister she's named, "Flounder"?

Marisa Moks-Unger

From "Midwestern Gothic Literary Magazine"

Veneration

On Good Fridays gone by
Dad took us to noon mass
stood us in line -
one by one we kissed
the foot of the cross
with the rest of the believers.
And again we stood in line to get
a nail for our pockets
to remember those
pierced into Christ.

Then, home, for more
reflection of the Word.
No radio, no TV, no play
until sometime after 3.
But, he found reflection
in the sacred act of spade
to soil. Digging dirt to
add a sapling to the yard.
After, he'd sip a Schlitz, his
head bent in homage to the tree.

Marisa Moks-Unger

From "Mud and Stars"
Nightballet Press, Cleveland, Ohio

She is Ocean

From my window I view the Master as she
begins her day with a graceful bow to
all that is powerful and knowing and unending.
With raised fist, she strikes a stance and rounds
her arms as furrows they swirl and arc and crest.
Flowing in a deep bow she lowers her knees
then slowly and gently she stands, lifts her torso
and waves hands like clouds touching whitecaps.

She is Ocean and in her I see the beauty of the sea.
Her fluid hands reach into the air that stirs the waves.
She is Ocean and now with one leg raised, then lowered,
she is swimming in deep waters and turns sweeping
side to side she churns the currents of energy
as waves unfurl through her, from her, beyond her.
She wards off all tension, all anger, all fear.
I inhale and her serenity washes over me and I know:
She is Ocean.

She is Ocean.

She is Ocean.

Marisa Moks-Unger

From "The Guest House"
Chester Publishing, Chester, Connecticut

Archeology Dig

Things I've crammed inside of my Lane hope chest:

caps and gowns, tassles tangled together,
christining gowns, hand-made,
the First Communiion dress – a Sears best of the economic trio
good, better and best – worn by two generations of daughters.
a wedding veil, and, finally,
near the bottom, in a dented box,
pearl encrusted shoes with

clumps of dirt stubbornly clinging to the heels.

Marisa Moks-Unger From "Eternal Snows" Upcoming Nirala Press, New Delhi, India

Trust

I

A little girl, I floated on florals, searched for purple clover globes
and goldenrod spindles to add to my bunch of
Queen Anne's lace.

The teen next-door waved. Grinned.
Pointed beyond a ditch to more flowers.

A Swallow, I soared high above the field.
Nestled on a branch of a weeping willow.

From my perch I peered below as he
gathered her in his arms
behind an elderberry bush.

I flew away when he chose blooms of innocence
until he had a bouquet
of his own.

II

A swallow, I soared high in the clouds.
High in the clouds that blinded my view.
In the clouds I fly for years until I spot a weeping willow and
nestle on a branch. Swoop below to

a ditch where a stubborn crocus, Manitou, rises
out of the frozen mud, inhales the final winter snows, and
stands tall. She extends her arm around a little girl crying,
clutching a bunch of withered wildflowers to her chest.

I settle on Manitou's right shoulder as she bends down,
embraces the child, and whispers healing nectar
into the girl's ear.

The woman stands with the child, stands in sweet spring rains.
Sweet spring rains run muck and mud off of them
into the ditch.

Fingers entwined, the two jump the ditch.
Land squarely on a tar-and-chipped road. They hop puddles,
gather fresh florals as the swallow hovers above them.

The girl rests fresh florals at a neighbor's doorstep.
Manitou nods and beams. And just then the sun cracks clouds and
spills its yolk upon our path.

Marisa Moks-Unger

From "Licksmack V"
Nightballet Press, Cleveland, Ohio

Communion

The moonlight is what woke her.
Spilled over the hardwood floor,
up the dust ruffle, onto the quilt.
Shone flashlight bright in her face.

The moonlight is what woke her.
So she tumbled out of bed
Hand grabbing her cell phone
To capture the moon's icicle bangs.

The moonlight is what woke her.
She clicked and enlarged the
one strand, a clenched fist, which
hung onto the moon's hair.

The moonlight is what woke her
So she expanded and clicked. The fist
becomes a naked torso –
legs folded and arms stretched to sides.

The moonlight is what woke her.
Again, expand, click. Torso
Turns to face of agony, head
Crowned in a thorny nest.

The moonlight is what woke her
And she set down the cell, cupped
her hands, aching, to partake in
her communion with the moon.

Marisa Moks-Unger

Unpublished
Response to Body Print

Bloom

You will be naked - completely naked as you are. All deceptions
will fall.

- Osho

My breasts
clouds and sun.

My collarbone
an ocean.

My torso
a red yogi.

My thighs
the earth.

From the earth
a verdant garden.

Irises draped in
royal purple capes.

Lush green stalks
embrace unfilled space

Ethereal me.

Picture This: Poets Creating Poems in Response to Art
Marisa Moks-Unger, MA, English

Integral to the role of Poet Laureate is the capacity to encourage and entice others to create new works, which are fresh poetic expressions. An exciting way to broaden the output of poetry from the local population is through dedicated exposure to visual art in ekphrastic workshop settings. By interacting with classic works of fine art, pop art, and personal photography, the resulting poems have the potential to contain vivid imagery as a response to the stories found behind the visual images. These poems retell, narrate, or imagine the action occurring in a work of visual art. This heightened writing occurs as poets are exposed to differing forms of visual art, then amplify their reactions to the painting, illustration, or photograph to lift and expand their understanding. Essentially, the poets give the artwork new meaning through poetry. In doing so, the community of poets grows in the depth of their craft and extends the beauty of the regional visual art assets through extended art appreciation created in poetry.

This project has three parts to enhance the lives of both the poets and those who value poetry through listening and reading the works of others. To reach the widest audience, this project is intended for poets ranging in age from young adults to seniors. The poem within a picture process is a rewarding, and often healing, method. The process of creating poems weighs as profoundly as the products themselves. Self-exploration, self-knowledge, and self-awareness are driving forces that shape these poems. Like fingerprints, no two poems are alike even though a group may be looking at the same stimuli. The parts of the project contain the following:

1. Offer three to five workshops for poets to explore their responses to classical art, contemporary pop art, and personal photographs. I have extensive experience in presenting ekphrastic poetry workshops to both secondary students and the general adult population. To cast the widest net, these writing sessions will be presented in both live and virtual formats. The virtual formats offer a bridge to community members whose schedules conflict with the live course offerings. After all, poetry is for everyone.
2. From these sessions, a book of poetry, "Picture This: Poets Creating Poems in Response to Art", will be created. The entries will partially include poems from area poets who work independently as well as those who attend the live workshop settings. Especially for those poets who are being published for the first time, this book is lucid proof of their work within the genre of poetry.
3. A release reading and reception will occur after this book is published, yet I envision pre-release readings and post-release readings of the works that the poets have created to give many opportunities to share in the craft. Writing by nature is a solitary activity and readings bring necessary companionship to support poets of all backgrounds within the community.