



The Poem in the Prose

BY CANDACE WALSH

When I asked Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge to contribute a poem to our Museum of Art commemorative ode fest (page 36), she politely demurred because of other commitments, but encouraged me to write a poem for the section. Although I did not think it quite appropriate to shoehorn my *pensées* into such elevated company, as I sat down to mull-pry my editor's letter into existence, I found that it wanted to take the form of a poem. If you've ever received a letter in the form of a poem, you know that what I'm hazarding here is, at least, plausible. If not, let this be the first.

To edit a magazine devoted to history
steeping in what endures
is to lose some sight of the ephemeral.

"Erosion, a term not quite
fitting, unless we aim
to find the beauty in what is lost"¹

But what is lost is the reverse of
to tangibly adore (although so much that's lost
claims adoration, when you could love
someone, something,
in need of conservation).

Like a painting in a hall way, speck-scabbed, forlorn²
of two glowing women, gravid,
One bears a deity, one just a boy
affinity undimmed
under films of time.

And I have felt the urge
to ink my child's first word
on a sacred page, next to birthdate and name
like Elizabeth's daughter
with her Ansel Adams muse³
who claimed a photograph
as a mnemonic of the heart.

"the residue of the past is very much with us"⁴
as the art museum's courtyard
always holds the last time
we spoke
(We're always walking through
someone's last time—
an invisible weight, selectively felt.
We're always the place that holds
our own)

Disappeared is not obscured
and takes the form of art.⁵ And will keep taking the form
of materials at hand.
And often shows what some would rather
we overlooked, or forgot
because art is in part the place we are meant to look
and the truth will out.

Ephemeral but unforgotten:
My sleeping babies' weight.
I absorbed the damp of their infinite trust
as they carved in me a nest.

They take, they take.
And when they go, they take.
Their abandon, my sweet ache.

As I wade through ephemeral life
They are typing airborne love poems
Aloft on teen pheromones
making it home
until they're not;
I carry that weight in my heart.

Missing making piquant *the existing*

Though, histories do birth stories
in the act of raking back and forth
to unearth more.
There's still so much to sift and sort
beneath the Palace floor.

- 1 "What's Not Lost," Carlos Contreras, page 36
- 2 "Into the Light," Kate Nelson, page 61
- 3 "Moonrise over Hernandez," Elizabeth Jacobson, page 38
- 4 "Thick Time," Luci Tapahonso, page 40
- 5 "The Art of Remembrance," Laura Addison, page 66

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