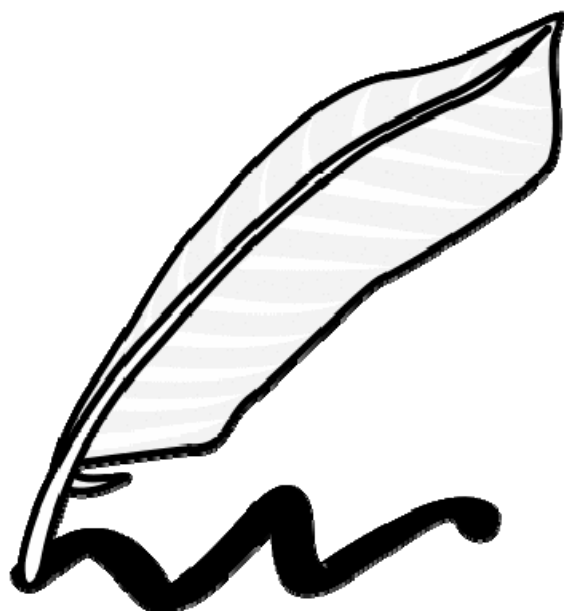


Fairbanks Arts Association's

15<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Statewide  
Poetry Contest



Judge: Jill Osier  
March 21, 2009

## 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Statewide Poetry Contest, 2009

### Elementary & Middle School:

1<sup>st</sup> Place, Ivan Kvapil, Fairbanks, "The Rules"

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, Grace Stauffer, Juneau, "Evacuee"

3<sup>rd</sup> Place, Shannon Hammond, Fairbanks, "From the Cold Swirling Rain"

### High School

1<sup>st</sup> Place, Evan Hannon, Fairbanks, "Rhythm"

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, Evan Hannon, Fairbanks, "An Overview of Circles"

3<sup>rd</sup> Place, Robin Bonneau Yokel, Fairbanks, "Colorblind"

### Adult

1<sup>st</sup> Place, Mary Langham, Homer, "A Pentimento"

2<sup>nd</sup> Place, Lauren de Paepe, Auke Bay, "Hunt and Gather"

3<sup>rd</sup> Place, Emily Wall, Juneau, "Proof"

“The Rules”

Watch the wind blow to the west

And the leaves fall to the east

Life will never be the same

No matter what the rules may be.

“Evacuee”

A harsh shove.  
I'm jostled through a crowd.  
Through child studded platforms.  
My label strangles me  
As I try to make my train.  
A line straightens  
Just recognizably through the door.  
My mother bends down  
Down on her knees  
And hugs me warm.  
I get on it.  
My window won't open.  
I shove, the train starts to move.  
My last message to my mother  
A heart,  
Drawn on my grimy window.

“From the Cold Swirling Rain”

I am from the tribe of the Tweety Bird foreheads,  
from clovers and foxes,  
to the cold swirling rain.  
From crisp tempura and worn jeans,  
to the sharp bite of frost,  
helping me escape the glowing fingers of light,  
that turn pale cells an angry red.

I am from worn red pencils,  
upon tattered drawings,  
clinging onto the passing time.  
From a splotched ally,  
burying her moist nose in my neck,  
to my restful childhood,  
slowly being lost to the passage of time,  
but preserved in pictures.

I'm from meatloaf and endless pages,  
to soft Akita fur and unwanted dried paint.  
From a land of ice fog,  
and strawberry pocky to slimy wood frogs.  
I'm from mud and green frilly dresses,  
to circles of ravens.

I am from the cold swirling rain,  
nothing but a raindrop,  
in the grand scheme of it all,  
a single raindrop,  
falling,  
    falling,  
        falling.  
Yet, an unique raindrop,  
all the same.

## “Rhythm”

Beat on the floor to tell me how your day went.  
Tap the information out on your wheel.  
We've been using words for too long. It's time  
For something different, time to shake out the  
insides and let new life grow. I'm tired of scraping  
semantics out of a barrel and selling them.  
You can only build a house out of sticks for so long,  
and my bricks are rhythm.

## “An Overview of Circles”

Don't let the hearth spark, you'll catch everything on  
fire. Who'll clear away the ash trays? If you don't  
mind I'll keep the door. closed. The  
warmth will slip out without paying  
the proper dues. He's a crafty one, and he'll steal  
the stars out of your sky. And while the moon is bright,  
don't ask him to explain why he took the position.  
You might just get an answer so long you would  
need several flow charts to connect them all.  
Neat little lines of connection bounding from noun  
to noun, lines in the sand that say  
here you do not cross.

“Colorblind”

A girl sits on the sidewalk  
dragging a toe  
back and forth, through the gutter.  
She looks at her feet,  
they are the color of her last birthday cake:  
a spongy sweet lemon  
smothered in silky chocolate frosting  
(with eight candles).  
Momma says she is mahogany  
like the bathroom cabinet,  
but a kid at school called her  
black,  
and she doesn't understand  
why he can't see the difference  
between chocolate and charcoal.

A boy chews his fingernails  
in front of the TV  
that speaks in the same strange language  
as his mother when she cooks long noodles.  
A bully called him a Jap  
But he's not.  
His parents say he is Chinese,  
and they think he should understand  
the Asian soap operas they watch,  
but he knows he's American.  
The kids at school, and his mom and dad,  
make him so confused  
he wishes he was born  
white, and blond,  
eating burgers,  
not stir fry.

A girl bounces on her toes,  
hurling a basketball  
against an unforgiving brick wall.  
She wishes she could line up all the white people  
she knows, and throw red bricks at them  
until they turn as tanned and brown  
as her daddy  
who works in the fields.  
She hates all those other kids at school  
who are black, and Asian, and not really American,  
but they are legal,

and don't have to hide when  
police drive down the streets  
looking for migrants.  
She doesn't like living in a country  
that professes equality only  
for people who are born there.

A boy stares at his desk,  
hands white against its brownness  
like snow on the ground  
He won't look up at the other students  
whose hands match the color of their desks,  
or at the teacher  
who only calls on white kids  
to answer questions.  
His parents are lawyers,  
and he knows he should be grateful  
he was born into rights, money,  
and skin pale as moonlight,  
but he wants to be like other kids.  
He wants to ask them friendly things,  
like their favorite flavor of ice cream,  
or how they liked living in Mexico,  
but they don't trust him,  
'cause he's the same color  
as the police, and the politicians,  
'cause he was born here,  
born to go to this school,  
where they teach him to pity  
the kid next to him with no life  
'cause he has no money.  
But he doesn't pity;  
he wants the kid next to him  
to understand  
that he doesn't really belong here either.

“A Pentimento”

I burn the disc  
    piano jazz recorded live  
Yoshi's Nitespot, far you bent over I imagine  
    applying some tool to the wooden skiff in your yard.

I've never been to Yoshi's, haven't given anything away in five years  
    but now track three alone (is learning to hide  
imperative to womanhood) alone at night, rain sounding tent skin  
    living here, where weather must be talked about.

View from my door (can we know without comparing) the bay, bluffs  
    rock birded slick, details dissolve into fog, into clouds  
keeping tomorrow's rain, but now track three forces.

Allows you to dissolve where color perceives as sound, imagine  
    clouds paralyzed, where the painter has repented, changed his mind  
about scene, wiped away mountain tops into fog with turpentine spirits  
    (what if love transforms) aged paint translucent, a pentimento.

This is the mood where love kills a love and the hull  
    Of my hips like the meadow, clotted with blossoms  
a pentimento (no one until now has matched the fullness  
    of my cousins lips, at sixteen yrs how they tasted of our secrets)  
the repenting overwhelms, will overwhelm into deep content  
    the deepest of your life  
        what has passed  
            and what will come.



in the sheer force of  
creation. What devastation  
in their slow climb to heaven,  
so subtle that we cannot see it until  
it is already here, tumbling down  
upon us. The fire rumbles deep  
beneath. I hear the motor start and move

towards my body in the boat.  
Wounded, I am whole  
and calm as flocks of seagulls on the rocks,  
their breasts white with nothing  
to do but let in sunlight, breathe, pump blood.  
In giving myself all up  
to you, to what may, I became  
nothing but.

And so I stand now  
at the window, my empty bowl in hand,  
still as the heron in the glassy evening tide line,  
sickle held ready in the neck.  
Empty with everything  
and nothing left  
to be but me.

.  
3.

It is not until we get her home  
through the waves of memory  
to clean and eat, that life rises up, taking  
a bit of our breath with it, and sifts  
away through the needles of the trees.

We turn our eyes towards  
the work. There is still  
fire, waiting in the hearth.  
The scene is now—or is it  
still—a dream, but  
I have a feather and you  
a shining black stone  
to warm us while  
we clean the bones.

## Proof

We have photo after photo  
of splashes—

white wings of water  
against blue silk,

swirls and eddies  
showing where just a moment ago

a fin, a head, a tail  
disappeared into the quiet dark

of the sea. And this is just how  
it should be, when we show photos

down south at Christmas to curious  
relatives, contemplating Alaska.

This is just how it should be  
when we try to remember our own lives

and what brought us to this  
moment. We can see the imprint

of hope on the surface of our faces,  
while in our bellies, something dives

deep.