

2013
Fifth Annual

Art Tales

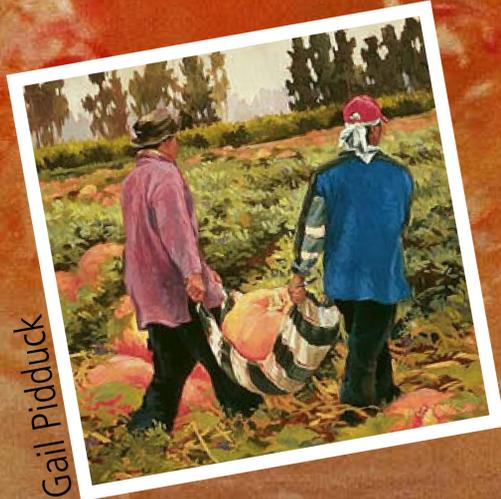
A Unique Contest
for Creative
Writers



Sherry Loehr



Richard Amend



Gail Pidduck



Dorothy Hunter



Hiroko Yoshimoto



Gayel Childress

CITY OF
VENTURA
PARKS, RECREATION &
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Art Tales

About the Contest



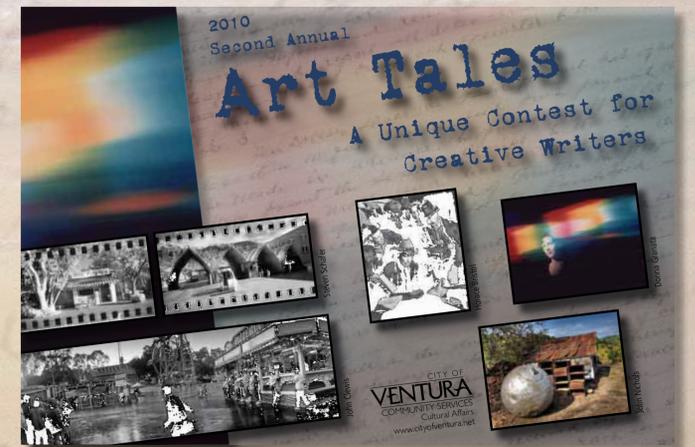
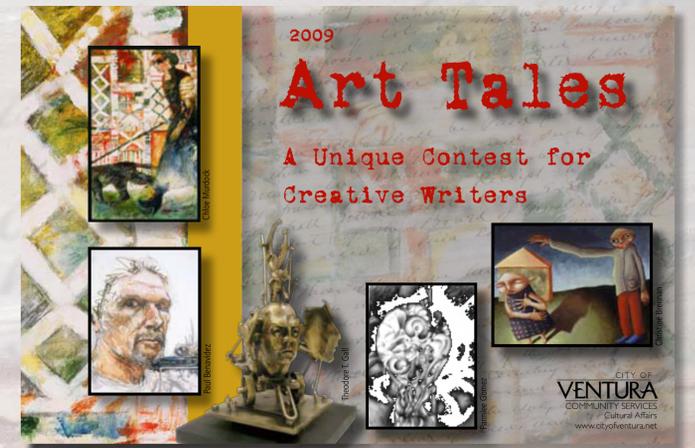
Beginning in 2008 the City of Ventura, in partnership with E.P. Foster Library, has sponsored “Art Tales,” a creative contest for local writers inviting them to submit an original short story or poem inspired by selected works from the Municipal Art collection on exhibit at the Library.

In the contest writers are asked to interpret an artwork broadly using a technique called *ekphrasis*.

This method, which literally allows one work of art to inspire another, has been in practice for over 2,500 years, giving a fresh “voice” to art and offering a unique and symbiotic exchange between two creative and inspired minds.

Using this method, for example, a writer today could compose a poem or story that interprets the enigmatic smile on the *Mona Lisa*, painted more than 500 years ago.

Winners over the past five years have risen effectively to this challenge, producing some extraordinary literary responses, including these prize-winning works from this year’s contest.



Inspired by "Mojave,"
c. 1986, oil on paper,
Dorothy Hunter



Second Place: High School Fiction

Look Away, Wet Paint

By Grace O'Toole

Excerpt:

....A door creaks slightly with the flow of air, exposing the interior of a miserable white-washed room. The only color in the room is on the wall. It's a shattered mirror, covered in thick streaks of what looks like wet white paint around the edges and a splotch of vivid red near the center, the color diffusing to an orangish pink that reach to the side of the frame and drip down to the sink.

The red drips down to the floor, and a single blue eye peers out of the mirror.

**Second Place:
Youth Fiction**

Paradise

by Rachel Chang

Excerpt:

Falling into a hole wasn't my idea. It all started when I was exploring the Mojave Desert. Suddenly, my legs began to spin. I started to run, running faster by each second. But I wasn't controlling it. It was a wild roller coaster. Then my legs stopped. Since I was so confused, yet excited, I didn't realize soon enough that I was falling into a dark abyss. It was like a waterfall, but with rapid sand. The hole was calling my name, and using mysterious fingers to pull me in. I couldn't escape; I began to fall....

First Place:
Youth Poetry

Mojave

By Dahyun Na

Another wrinkle next to my eye
Disturbance under my misty, barren surface
Remembering my past
My heart not yet fully healed
Bubbling with confusion of mixed colors
Forced into one place
Like oil and water that never seem to mix
Red love for my home
Red passion for my tribe
Orange liveliness in traditions from my ancestors
Orange fascination in growth of my children
Green joy in peaceful, repeated daily routine

Orange warning for strangers who harm Mother Nature
Red rage toward invaders who took away my home
Dark blue powerlessness like falling through an endless tunnel with no exit
Orange loneliness in a new environment without my family
Yellow hope for the return of my old life
Perplexities under my smooth surface
Living my life with memories, carrying the past



Inspired by "Mojave," c. 1986, oil on paper, Dorothy Hunter

Second Place:
High School Poetry

A haiku:
Cut then Burn

By Breanna Wheeler

Dance in the hot sun
In a sense, sleeping past death
Scorched by nakedness

First Place:
Adult Poetry

Return of the Firebird

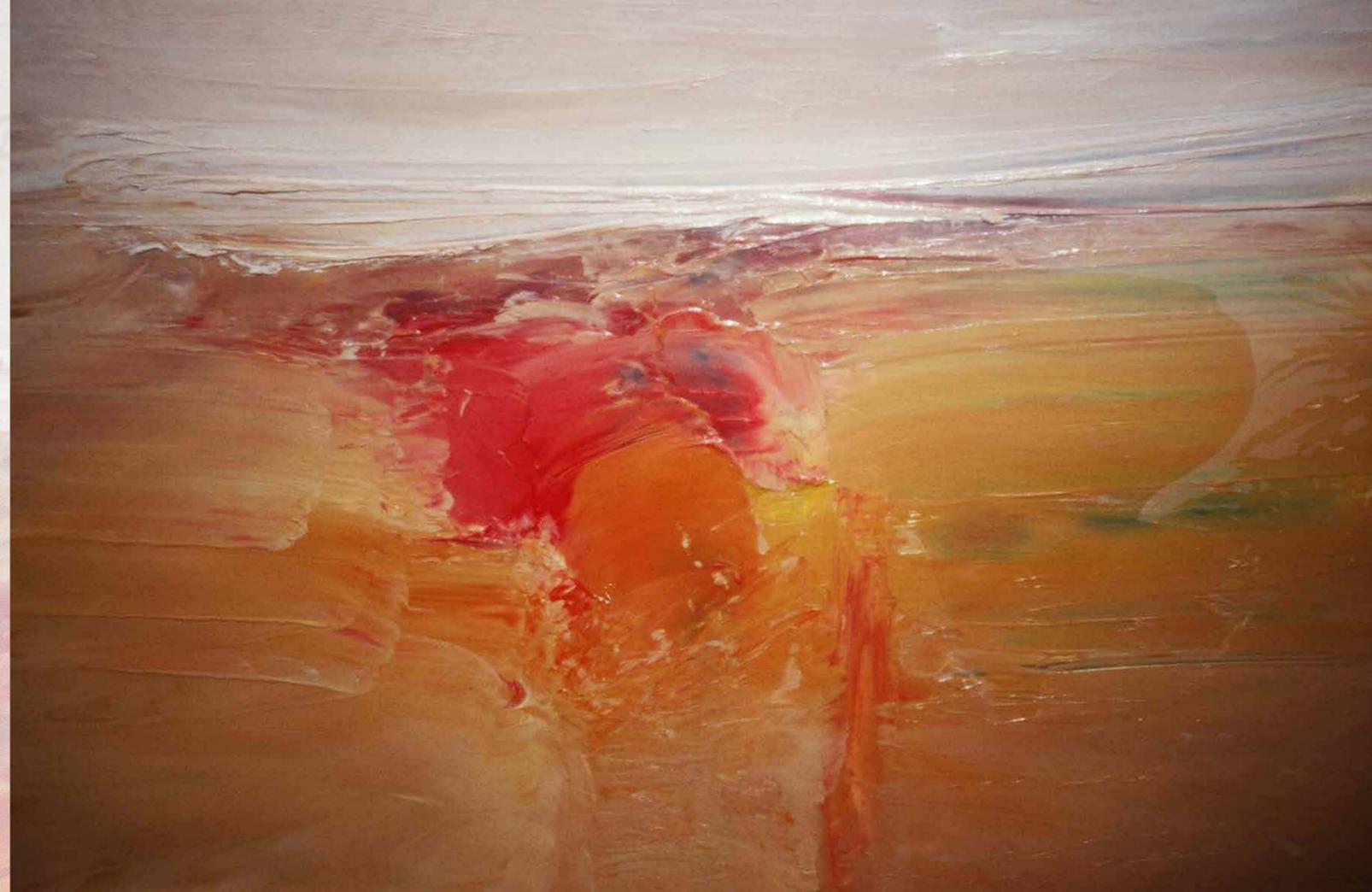
By T.M. Göttl

Excerpt:

Stop this forgetting.
 Recall harvesting the scales of flying snakes of fire—
 scales shed into sun-dry ocean and river basins,
 basins filled with scales of every flame-color—
 green, yellow, red, blue.
 The people of the ocean that was
 danced as they'd learned from torches and cook fires,
 stamped and circled all night and all day,
 danced the serpent scales into soft grains of heat and sun.
 Fire sand burned their feet and faces,
 and they never forgot
 how to dance like a cook fire....

The firebird means the people must die.
 The people must wake with blue infant eyes
 crying through hot blood and quick air.
 The people must dream.
 The people must dance.
 The people must burn.

*Inspired by "Mojave,"
 c. 1986, oil on paper,
 Dorothy Hunter*



Adult Poetry Entry

Desert Hope

By Tim Pompey

I cannot stop, though sand and heat
 may dry my bones and drain my blood,
 for out on the horizon, a palette of water
 and cool days—a hint of rain.

Illusion, yes, but isn't that always the case,
 the truth that haunts us? Whatever the wish,
 whatever the dream, the bodies get buried.

Walk.Walk.Walk. I do this now without
 much thought. It doesn't matter if what I see
 or what I think I see is a fixed point.
 This landscape is my compass.

The mirage, pooling miles beyond.
 However quixotic, however delusional,
 I've found my road to paradise.



Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend

First Place: High School Poetry

I Heard the Talking Trees

By Nicole Bellmore

Excerpt:

... The stiff grass shook and bushes stilled
while the trees chattered.

Each one had a voice unique to itself.

One would thump another would rustle.

A tall one sang in high pitched squeals.

Another one bellowed with waving branches
while dark leaves flew through the sky...

Second Place: Youth Poetry

Blue Trees

by Nadia Connelly

Soft sunshine shines
through our branches.
The soft grass sways
as if dancing in the wind.

The sound of lonely bird cries
echo off us
filling the silent forest
with sound.

The sun is as brilliant
as a bonfire in the sky.
Silver deer gallop so fast
it is as if they are flying.

The smell of crisp leaves
fills our noses.
The hot sun shines
and makes us warm.

Wicked smiles are carved
onto our trunks.
We are the keepers
of the forest.

But the soft whispery wind
sings its song
and cools us
charming every animal.

Squirrels scamper
quickly up our trunks
tickling us
with their big, bushy tails.

If we are quiet
you can hear
every animal's heart beating.
We are all united.

First Place: High School Fiction

A Thousand Ways

By Kienna Kulzer

Excerpt:

...There are a thousand ways to die. The phrase popped into her mind again in the forest in the early morning, just as the dawn was approaching. She had never been there at quite that time. She liked the phrase, liked its sound and its rhythm. She rolled the words across her tongue a few more times. Suddenly, its antithesis was there too, unsettling and alarming. There are a thousand ways to live. It didn't have the same smooth, steady rhythm. It was bubbly and light. It had a refreshing vitality to it; she couldn't get it out of her head....



Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend

First Place: Adult Fiction

Former Friends and Passerby

By Joni Porter

Excerpt:

...To be recognized by the trees was no surprise; neither of them had changed much, each aging with the other.... Elsa closed her eyes, took one last deep breath and wore a smile as she felt the burning stares of the surrounding trees follow her inside.

First Place: Youth Fiction

The City in Color

By **Sofia Felino**

Excerpt:

....The Anna could feel the tension in the room. It felt like the Wizard of Oz, where the girl walks into a world full of color, but in reverse. She saw everything, heard everything, felt everything, but there was nothing she could do but let the color bleed from her world....

The next morning, Anna's red eyes burned as they opened. The memory of last night's dream sizzled in her memory. She hadn't had that dream since...she stared at the old photograph as she climbed up. A pier, a tall building, tall trees, all in beautiful lively color. She knew it meant she was submerging from out of the woods, and into the daylight. The test, and those two rays of light pushing through the window. It was all going to fit together.

She smiled into the dusty mirror. Then, closing her tired eyes, she saw it: the city in color.

Inspired by
 "Ventura Pier and the
 Holiday Inn,"
 1989, collage and acrylic,
 Gayel Childress



Second Place: Adult Fiction

The Ventura Pier at Sunset

By **Valerie Lynn Pike**

Excerpt:

The Ventura Pier at sunset is like an iguana that can change its colors. Everyone will agree that at sunset, the blue sky is so vibrant and vivid! The waves reflect a sapphire blue. The impressive and usually green palm trees change to a bright shade of crimson....

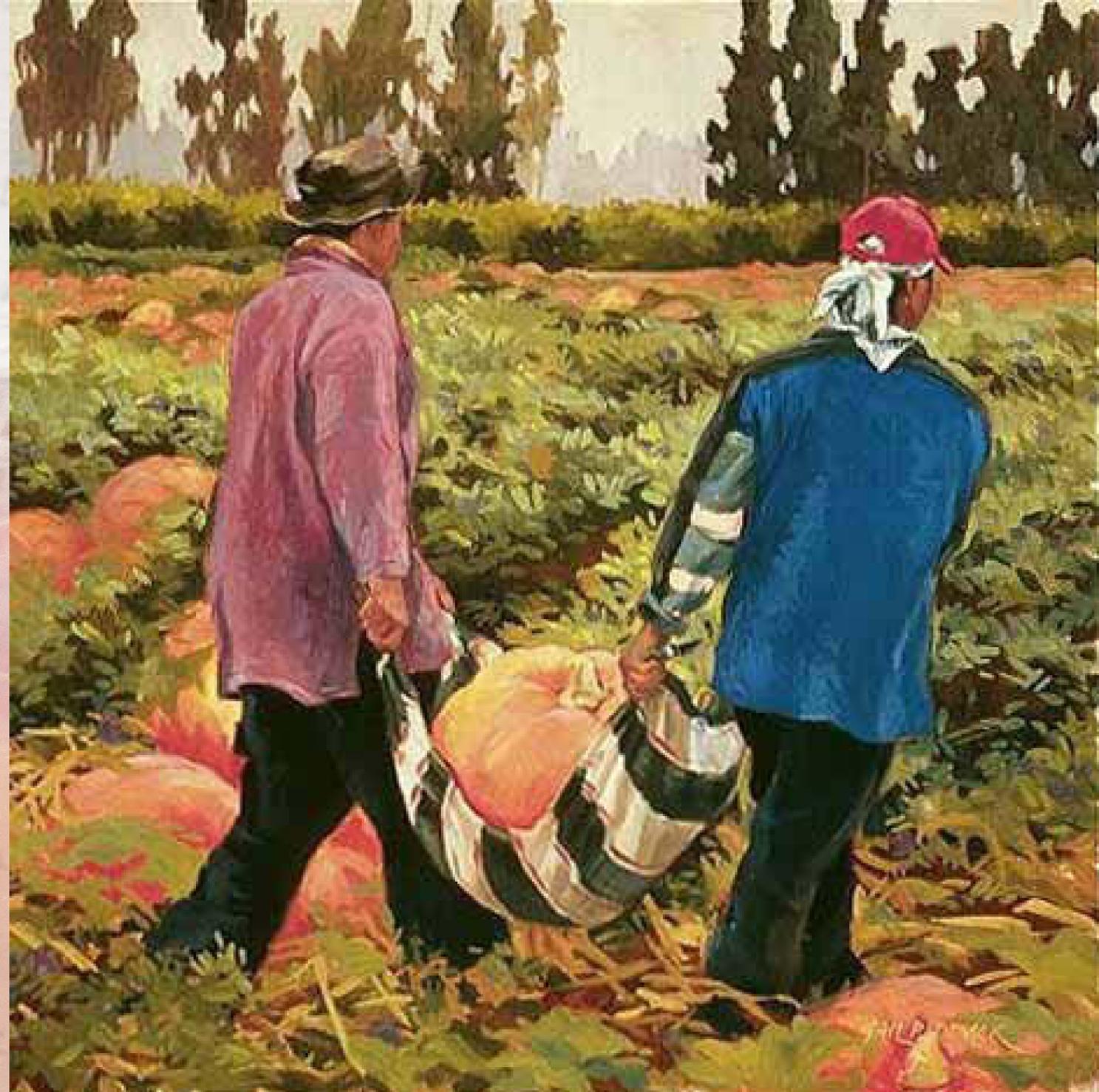
Second Place: Adult Poetry

This Dance

By Steve Brightman

There is
no way to
do this with
quiet dignity.
There is
no way to
escape this
unwieldy
struggle,
this dance
of atlas in
reverse.

There is
no way to
survive
our fruitless
embarrassments
on our own.
There is
only clumsy
distribution
of weight and
a handful of
shared sideways
steps toward
the dying sun.



Inspired by "Two Men and a Pumpkin," 2003, oil on canvas, Gail Pidduck



Inspired by "Green Bird at La Posada," 2002, oil on canvas, Sherry Loehr

Bittersweet

By Diana Blackburn

Three-note minor key
Among bittersweet berries
One little green bird
Like feeling your lost kisses
Like holding your photograph

Adult Poetry Entries

Bird Song

By Maggie Westland

Oh
What a tale
This is in juxtapose
A tiny woman placed
So perilously, a bird of prey
Who prays for her to wake
As waves of sound surround
Reverberate in arcs of ink

A bower bird admires his lady love
A postal card kept near to nest
A lush of fruit, if we could only
Sing the song she plays
The bird repeats
We'd know what note
Began the growth of
Tree, filled up the
Throat

Adult Poetry Entry

Found

By Rich Preneuf

Es tan corto el amor, y es tan largo el olvido – Pablo Neruda

Found
in a used book store
Love: Ten Poems

The bookmark
for the saddest lines:
a dried yellow rose

Love is so short
and forgetting
is so long

The pressed flower
crumbles into tiny flakes
of gold leaf

And begs the question:
what the reader
wanted to remember

Love cut
short or
that final touch?

Inspired by "Yellow
Rose for Teiko II," 1999,
pastel, charcoal and 22K
gold leaf on paper,
Hiroko Yoshimoto



Youth Poetry Entry

Yellow Rose

By Tess Whitley

Excerpt:

I am as yellow as the sun and as beautiful as the sky

I wonder when my petals will fall off

I hear the wind blowing like a wolf

I see the green grass below me

I want to touch the blue sky...

Third Place Winners

High School Poetry

The Girl Called Eleanor

By Marissa Roberts

I watch the leaves fall straight through the world
 The tree trunks sway like dancing little girls
 And then everything comes alive
 Light slips through the trees like tears from my eyes
 I just want to reach for the top of the trees
 But as I lift up my arm I finally find peace
 I curl up in a ball and just lose my mind
 I was tricked by the trees too many times



Inspired by "Blue Trees," 2001, mixed media/rice paper, Richard Amend

Youth Fiction

Lost in the Shadows

By Hana Vrablik

Excerpt:

"Charlotte!"

My voice rang out loud and clear, yet still there wasn't an answer. I tried again. This time, my voice interrupted the peaceful mountains that watched over me and the blue trees. I've always loved those trees, the way they turned blue in the shadows of the setting sun. But today they were abrasive. They stood in my way as I frantically looked around for my lost, little cousin.

"Char-LOTTE!" I cried out desperately.

High School Fiction

Mourning

By Monica Boedigheimer

Excerpt:

Search and rescue flew through the trees still blue with mourning, as if they were nothing foreign. They inhaled the throttling fog with no reaction in their lungs. This was their job. The underbrush gave way to their stampede, their crunching and crashing through the wood's commemorative moment....

Adult Poetry

Navigating by Starlight

By Kimbrough Ernest

If on a jeweled night,
 a swimmer,
 or a man with a canoe,
 navigated a tangled waterway
 of doubt and deliberation,
 rowed beyond
 the mire and the murk,
 and farther on,
 out into a clearing of some kind,
 found a moment
 perhaps

when he could lift up oars
 and float there
 in the light
 of his own understanding,
 would it be too much to say
 that his journey was good,
 or good enough?

Would it be too much to say,
 or too little?