

2014
Sixth Annual

Art Tales

A Unique Contest
for Creative
Writers



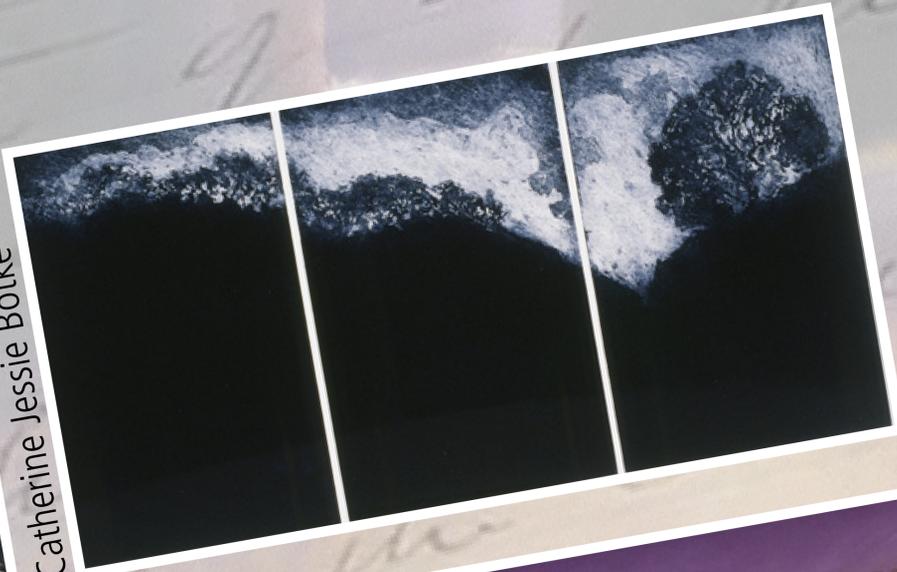
Debra McKillop



Elisse Pogofsky Harris



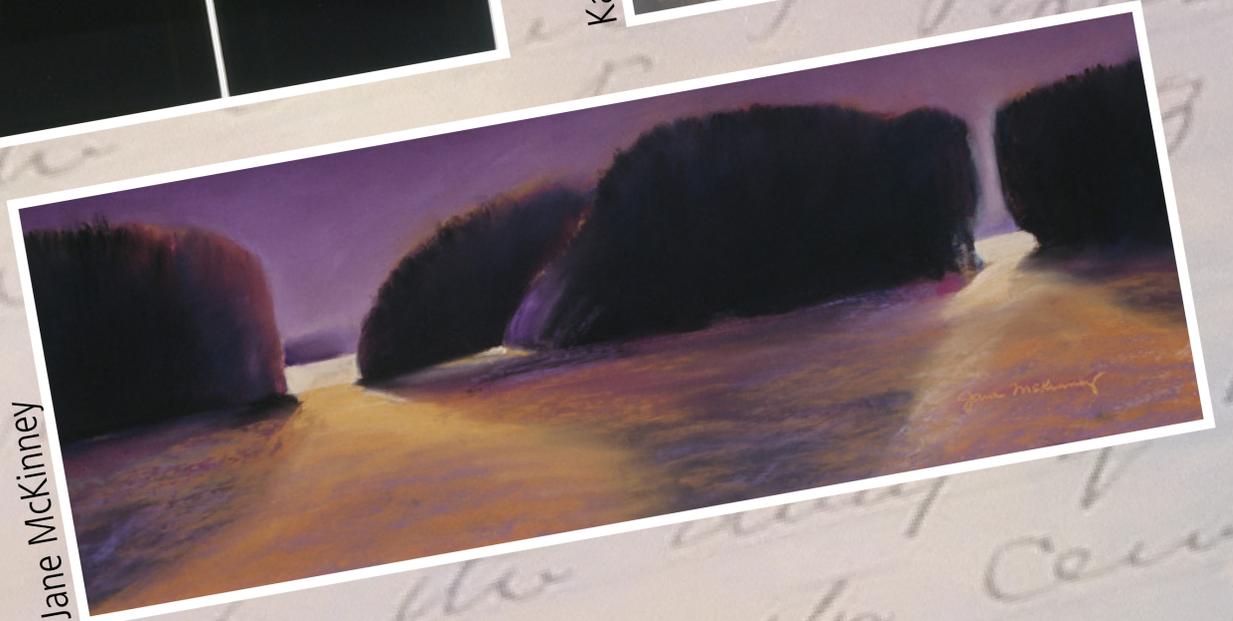
Alberta Fins



Catherine Jessie Botke



Katherine Chang Liu

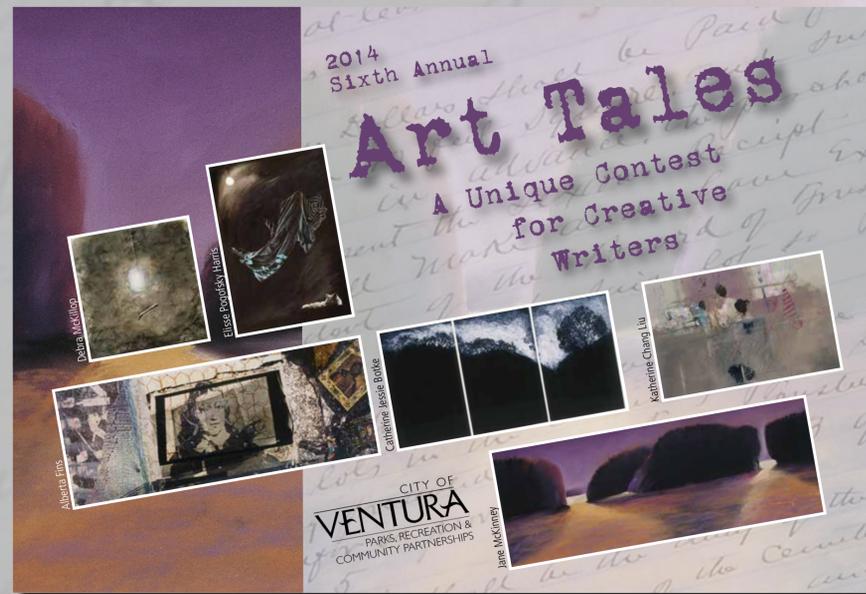


Jane McKinney

CITY OF
VENTURA
PARKS, RECREATION &
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Art Tales

About the Contest

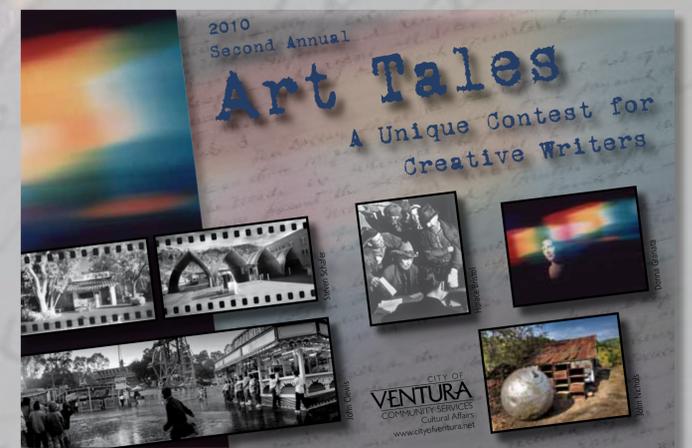
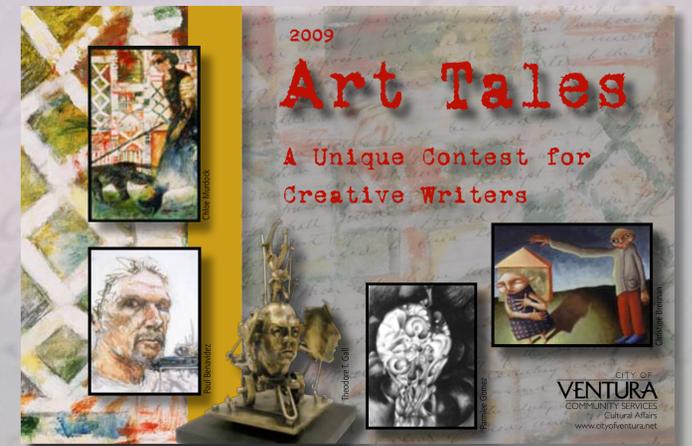


Beginning in 2008 the City of Ventura, in partnership with E.P. Foster Library, has sponsored “Art Tales,” a creative contest for local writers inviting them to submit an original short story or poem inspired by selected works from the Municipal Art collection on exhibit at the Library.

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: Filtered Vision, 1999, print on paper, Alberta Fins

First Place: Youth Poetry

Grief

by Sihyun Na

My head exists
within a black storm.
Thunder wakes me.
Standing in oblivion,
my plans
are forgotten.
Everything
has clouded over.
Her face
draws itself
repeatedly
across the universe.

While I envision
hearing her laugh,
watching her talk,
feeling her hair,
the clock hurries forward.
Engulfed in nothingness,
I wish that
my tears would
gather,
form a bridge
for her to
walk back
to the world
I am living in.

Tie: Third Place: High School Poetry

Who are you? by Sarah Yenney

excerpt:

....I am the star that illuminates the screen on your living room wall,
I am the face you watch from your couch,
I am simply your drawing scribbled on the page that lies open on your shelf,
I am the false forgeries in a libertine's list,
I am your whispers where rumors brew,
Remember this, If I meet you I might ask,
Who are you?

Tie: Third Place: Adult Fiction

Venn Diagrams by Gerald Zwiers

excerpt:

Her hair was blowing wildly to the left as she walked smoothly and gracefully away from the man who stood still as a marble statue. It had been an unpleasantly warm and windy day, and in that awkward unnamed gap of time when the afternoon slowly melts into twilight, he stood and watched her. She knew he watched her, but fiercely determined, she moved forward with all her might and did not turn around even once. As she walked into the dry hot direction of brightness he noticed how everything about her blended into a soft silhouette of darkness. All differences between the qualities of skin and hair, between the textures and intense colors of fabrics, as well as any detail of what was ahead, were lost, overwhelmed by the blinding light she was heading into.....

Inspired by:
 Birthday of the World,
 1991, oil on paper,
 Elisse Pogofsky Harris

Honorable Mention:
 Adult Poetry

Fencepost Song

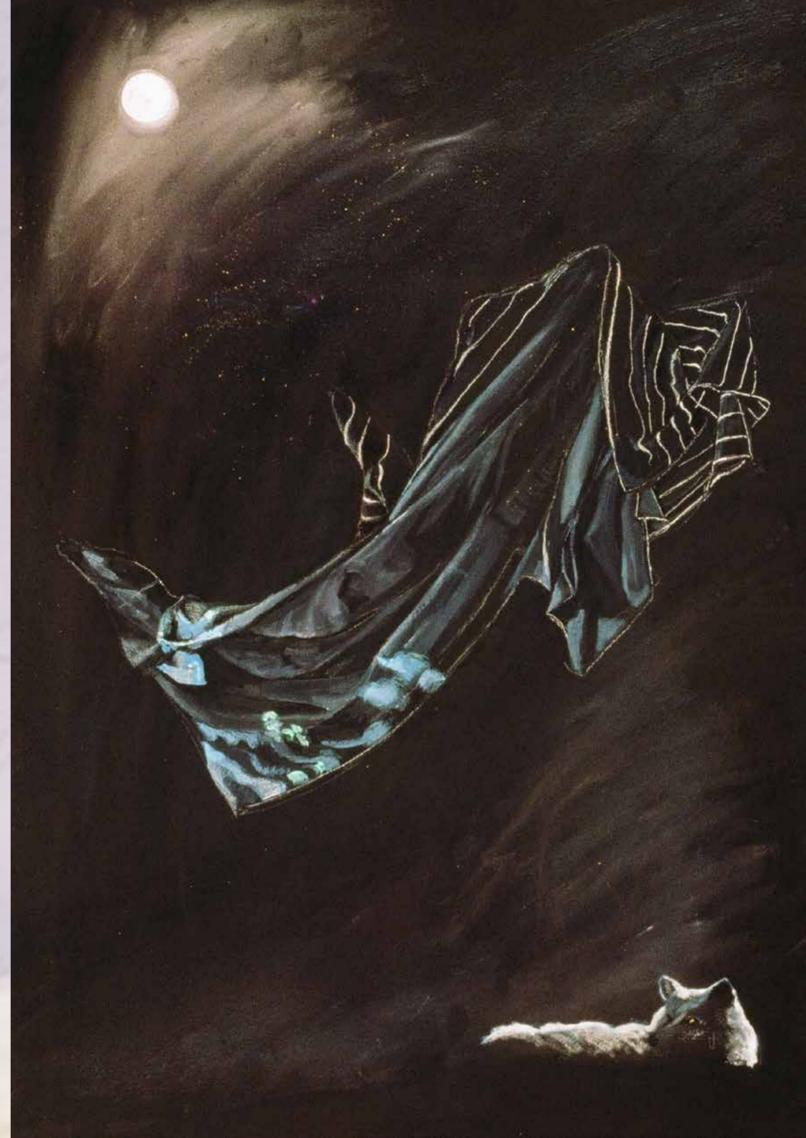
by Joe Amaral

excerpt:

Storm-bristled wind
 rustles
 my unkempt hair

Sprays
 mop-water clouds
 across
 ancestral skies
 backlit
 by a crystal ball moon

It has been foretold



First Place: Youth Fiction

A Present

by Hana Vrablík

The gleaming coat of a wolf was engulfed in the dark air. The moon cut through the sky like a knife, and everything below it was washed in a pale, white glow. A breeze whispered through the black branches of the trees. And the wolf lay there expectantly, its dark eyes open, as if it was waiting for something. It seemed as though the whole world was waiting too, for the wind stopped blowing and the air became stiff. You could hear nothing except silence and you could see nothing except the darkness of the sky under

the radiance of the white moon. And then there it came, a great present wrapped in the colors of the shaded sky, floating down to the ground and dithering in the contrast of colors. The gift landed on the ground, and the wolf, though interested, didn't stir. Everything was silent and still for a while again, but then the box shivered. It quaked and quivered until the cardboard burst open and colors danced out and into the world. Rich shades of reds and pinks blossomed onto every pale flower, and the soothing tone of mint green seeped into the grass. Baby blue painted itself across the sky, as oranges and violets settled into the lifeless corners of the world. The yellow sun finally came out, along with the flamboyant animals, celebrating the gift of color to the once dull and silent world.

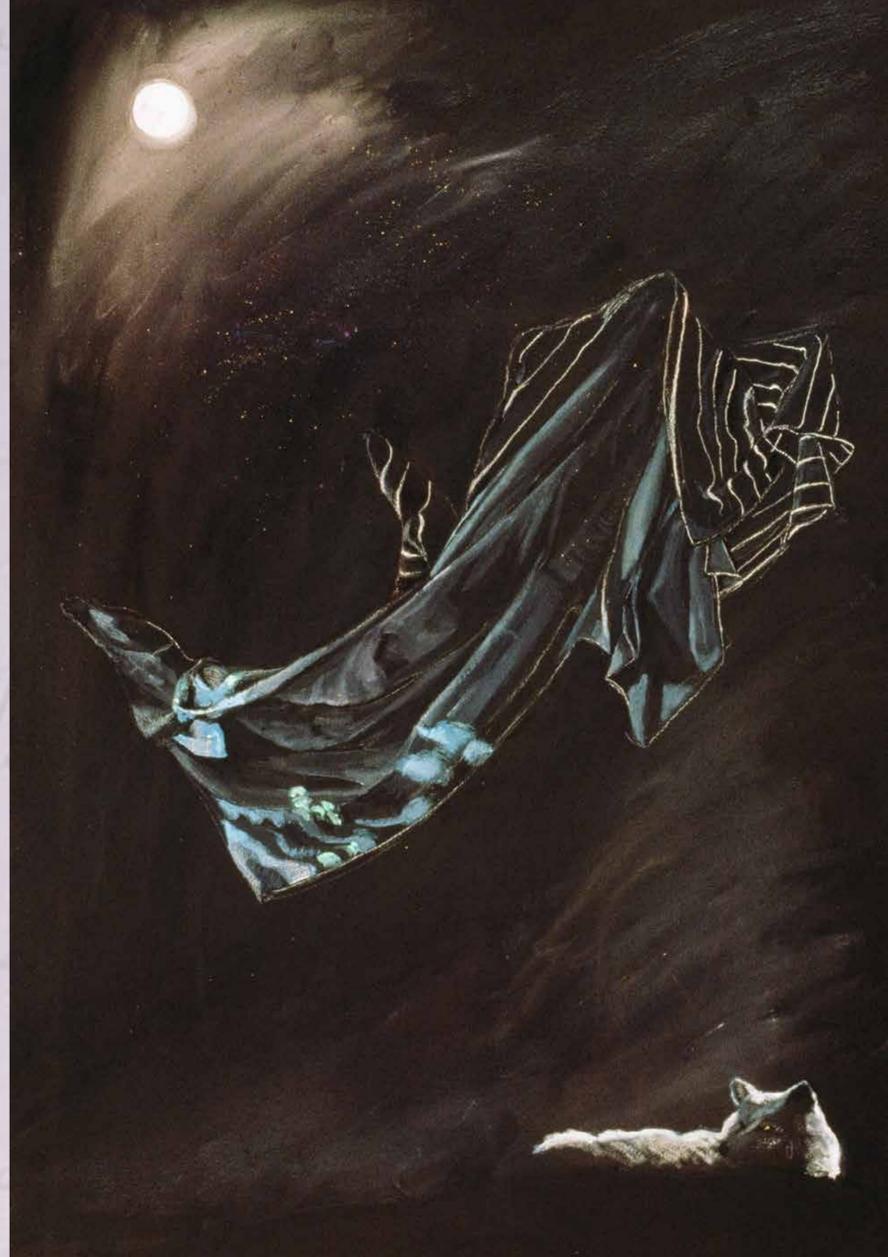
Second Place: Adult Poetry

The Secret

by Donna Prather

He stood in the cleft between the trees
 remembering how it felt when skin brushed fur
 though it had been many years before his time
 when Man had come to them
 his hand tucked in his pocket
 a blade tucked in his hand
 that spectral figure
 haunting the land
 wanting to be safe
 spending his days
 setting traps that
 caught only him
 his concrete homes
 his iron-clad fences
 his steel machines
 his tin-plated guns
 his golden coins
 his silver words
 his brassy noise
 always his noise
 filling the void of
 those silent spaces
 frightening him
 their shadows
 cast from
 within
 his fears
 gaining strength
 weakening him in the end
 if only he had known the secret

He gazed up at the moon
 watching it slide
 across the sky
 his muzzle raised
 catching its glow
 frost crackled and fell
 from his whiskers
 his breath rising
 in the frigid air
 he turned
 the others
 waited
 his shadow
 led the way
 merging with theirs



Inspired by: Birthday of the World, 1991, oil on paper, Elisse Pogofsky Harris

Second Place: Youth Poetry

Moonlit Legend

by Nadia Connelly

The darkness of the night spilled over,
 yet all was still.

The wolf stood and waited.
 All animals of the forest stood and
 waited beside the wolf.

The wind whispered of the past.
 The trees murmured their reply.
 All animals stood still.

Magic swirled, animals came, all waited.

Moonlight danced, and it happened.
 A cape of moonlight and sun drifted down,
 down to earth.

Silver deer galloped, white doves cooed.
 It was the birthday of the world,
 and all had come to see.

The sun began to rise. The silver deer were gone.
 The majestic wolf too.

The wind and the trees nodded to the sun.

It was the birthday of the world.

First Place: High School Poetry

Storm of Thought

by **Cianna Calia**

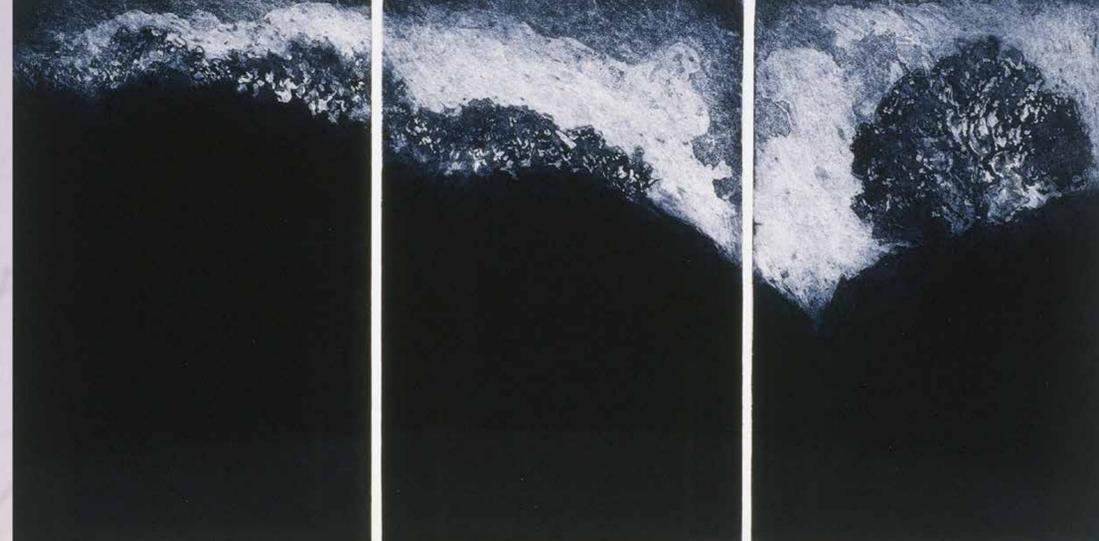
excerpt:

The only nightmares I have to fear
 Are waking hours, so dull and drear.
 By day my life is run by the clock,
 So much work to do, tick-tock, tick-tock.
 As the hours pass, tick-tock, it seems
 I've no time for thinking, nor for dreams.
 My bills to pay and my home to keep,
 But everything changes when I sleep.
 Everything changes when I sleep.

When I lie down in my bed at night,
 There's no more work and there's no more
 light.

Then from the hours without number
 Of horrid, thoughtless, wakeful slumber
 That midnight storm of thought awakes me
 And my imagination takes me
 Around the world or across the sea,
 To the lands of shadowed reverie.

Inspired by:
 Midnight Storm, 1997, aquatint,
 Catherine Jessie Botke



Tie: Third Place:

Youth Poetry

A Shadow

by **Anna Nelles**

excerpt:

I sat in my bunk
 in my RV
 watching the waves
 flowing so free—
 a passer-by from Ireland
 enjoying a California beach
 drifting towards sleep.
 But then a shadow
 blocked my view.

Tie: Third Place: High School Fiction

Midnight Storm

by **Brodie Shore**

excerpt:

The wind howled through the brush and into the trees, blowing the pouring rain at an inescapable angle, effectively drenching the prone bodies of the recon marines. * * *

The sniper removed the cover off his night scope, and focused it on the floodlit compound of the military prison. His knuckles were white under the gloves, and the rain somehow got in between the glove and finger where he had cut the glove so his index finger was exposed. It was heavily guarded, and there were no shadows, every corner illuminated by the halogen lights. With the wind, combined with the distance, the rifle would be useless, but at this point, shooting wasn't their job. They were just there to watch, and they did, motionless in the never ending downpour and fierce, bitter wind of Eastern Russia.

Second Place: Adult Fiction**Field Notes #24**by **Annabelle Warren***excerpt:*

,,, it is a drawing my niece had given me. She was 4 at the time, I couldn't say how old she is now. My sister stopped talking to me long ago. In fact, the last time I had seen either of them was when my niece gave me this picture. It's just a series of black dots, presumably inky fingerprints. She appears to have experimented with mediums, because pencil and crayon collide on the same page. I can see that she used her fingernails to scratch at the waxy crayon portion of the drawing, and realize with horror that it looks very similar to my fingernail marks in the yellow wallpaper. I can't remember what happened, but I can only assume that in some faded stupor I panicked and tried to escape my own room through the walls. I look at this drawing and I suddenly feel ferociously jealous. Not the kind of jealous I feel when I see someone with nice clothes and a haircut and deodorant streaks in their armpits—but a kind of jealousy for something non-physical. Something I can only reflect on, but never hope for: my youth. I wish for 4 years old, to be satisfied with a piece of paper and a crayon.

Inspired by:

Field Notes #24, 2001, monotype,
Katherine Chang Liu**Tie: Third Place: Youth Fiction****Field Notes #24**by **Bailey Welch***excerpt:*

” I smell the ocean with its amazing waves crashing against the rocks all lined up against the edge of the long and graceful beach. I hear the waves and the boats talking to each other. They seem happy to have each other, but I can tell they are scared also. I think they might be scared of the darkness there or the cold dark clouds that sleep endlessly there or they might be scared of the sun never appearing in the sky again, always having to live in the dark. * * * I feel lonely even though I am not. I know that the sun is there looking over the clouds and the clouds are there playing with the boats and the waves.

First Place: Adult Fiction

A Break in the Hedge

by Toni Guy

excerpt:

...I tucked my head and slipped sideways through the break in the hedge. I crossed the wet lawn and stood beside Gran. She patted my head and handed me the pegs. We finished the job quickly. She pulled, I plopped the pegs into their yellow container. The warm rain felt good soaking into my clothes. Gran picked up the full tub and headed inside.

In the sky a sliver of blue shone through. The rain lightened then stopped. I closed my eyes, the sun on my face. When I opened them, Gran was walking towards me with her tub. I smiled and handed her a peg.

Inspired by:
A Break in the Hedge,
1998, pastel on paper,
Jane McKinney



First Place: High School Fiction

Three Years by Erin Stoodley

excerpt:

... Since my last visit, the hedges have outstretched their limbs. * * * Avery's wrists glide the shears as she breaks the winding spurs.

"Do you need help?" I call through the sudden thrash of downpour.

She snaps a branch. Crrrrrrrk. "I'm fine." Crr. Crrrr. Crrrrrrrk.

"I'm sorry I didn't get out here sooner," I say. * * *

"You hate it here!" Avery shouts. "You hate it! You grew up here, but you hate Grandpa's house, the hedges! You hate how I stayed and took care of him when you—you! You left!"

Crrrk. Crrrrrrrrrk. Crrk. Crrrk. Crrrrrrrrrk.

Second Place: Youth Fiction

The Picture by Abigail Carroll

excerpt:

Suddenly, I was transported into the picture. I was surrounded by blocky, grassy-looking things. I touched the ground and it crumbled in my hand. It felt like pastels or oil paint. I could see a maze in front of me. Shivering, and making a "br-r-r" sound, the maze became a pathway. I followed it.

Tie: Third Place: Youth Poetry

A Break in the Hedge

by Chloe Vaughan

excerpt:

The sun comes down after rising so high, dusk slowly blotching out the bright blue sky. I race towards freedom waiting on the other side, reaching towards eternity, my heart filled with pride.

Inspired by:
Migration #8, mixed media
on paper, Debra McKillop

First Place: Adult Poetry

Shadow Play

by T. G. Lynch

excerpt:

In fields of gray, two shadows lay,
Till Dawn announced the coming Day,
And brought one shade to sermonize
his own philosophy:

“I fear,” said he, “we must atone,
Now, before the light has grown,
The Sun demands our rev’rence to
avert catastrophe!”

* * *

The shade now set himself to pray,
Prostrate upon the fields of gray,
And groveled there in terror whilst
the other shade observes:
“Sir,” he said, “if so inclined,
I think you may have lost your mind;
I leave you to whatever fate such
foolishness deserves.”

And when the sun, indeed, did rise,
And fixed itself above the skies,
The fields of gray lay empty save one
static silhouette:
A shadow shackled by his creed,
Alone, afraid, he atrophied,
And reaped within that single day
a lifetime of regret.



Tie: Third Place:

Youth Fiction

**The Canned
Shaped Diamond**

by Niklas Shore

excerpt:

... he remembered that he forgot
a shovel, so Ben looked around
and found a 13 inch long and 2
inch wide stick. The next day Ben
started digging. After a week, all he
found was a geode rock worth only
2 dollars. * * * Five years, 2 months
and 16 days later Ben found the 10
inch Can Shaped Diamond worth
50,000 dollars. * * * Ben came
home on March 22, 2001 at 2:14 to
find somebody had stolen the Can
Shaped Diamond. It's still a mystery
to this day who has it. That is the
only picture of the stick and the
diamond left.

Inspired by:
Migration #8, mixed media
on paper, Debra McKillop



Second Place: High School Poetry

Wings

by Dahyun Na

Standing at the edge of the ocean,
dim horizon stretches beyond.

Eerie, undisturbed tranquility
with rhythmic murmurs of waves--
silence before storm.

Flutter of wings fills sky,
as if chasing after light
at the end of a tunnel.

Vision eclipsed,
warmth taken away.

Waves rise
to chip away at large boulders.

Wind grows
from whispers to a wail.

Thin line of tension fills the air,
fragile and in peril of losing light.
An eternity passes.

Where the last bird flew
the moon now stands.

Nothing traps the light.
Faint silver glow reaches
ocean and whatever lies under.

Third Place: Adult Poetry

Migration

by Mary Kaye Rummel

Free from the call of the sea
a Luna moth sputters
into light through an open window.
Body too heavy for wings,
she stutters against my arm,
flickering like a loose bulb
in the anemone dark. Tonight
black inverts like a mother
playing *here and gone*, drawing
a tight shirt over her child's eyes.
Tonight beneath the moth moon
we will sleep back to back.



Inspired by: Migration #8,
mixed media on paper, Debra McKillop

Tie: Third Place:

Adult Fiction

**The Last
Minute Box**

by **Lynne Vrablík**

excerpt:

....How do you pack up an entire life? Sure, you can pack the wall hangings and paper goods, but wasn't she somehow leaving the memories behind? How do you pack the growth chart on the door jamb or the Crayola sailboat? How do you pack the O's? Hitori picked up the Last Minute Box and carried it out to the car to join the others. She turned around and gave the house a long, last look....

Tie: Third Place:

High School Poetry

The Eye of the Storm

by **Olivia Loorz**

excerpt:

The stinging salt water
pounds against the wooden hull
with each rapid heartbeat
of the dizzy sailors

Onward the bow
bends into the waves
surging, still searching
for relief

The luffing sails shout
"stop"
"turn around"
"The wind is not coming one way"

The captain
buried in his own
drunken calm

* * *

Behind his eyes
he dreams
of the light
the calm
of the eye of the storm

As a looming god
of a wave
comes to pound on the hull

Second Place: High School Fiction

Crossing Casimir

by **Gabrielle Genhart**

excerpt:

.... I gasp and my lungs fill with smoke, disease awaiting. My fingers still grasping the doorknob, a surge of energy flashes through my mind, alighting it with a vision that's not mine. I see a man with his face to the concrete, dying of deprivation, a mirror of everyone. Through him flares the lives of millions, starving, diseased, addicted, broken. He cries out, a sound that resonates through my body until it's on my own lips. I flinch away from the door and try the next. Again, it's locked, but the vision comes faster this time.

A woman lays with her back to the concrete, covered in sunlight, a mirror of everyone. Through her flares the lives of millions, smiling, laughing, dancing, imagining. She laughs along, a sound that resonates through my body until it's on my own lips....

Inspired by:
Migration #8, mixed media
on paper, Debra McKillop



Tie: Third Place: High School Fiction

Dallas's Palace by **Monica Boedigheimer**

excerpt:

Unnoticed, he retreated to his fortress. Today, he needed a good dragon fight. He scanned the sky—hand shading his eyes, but there was merely the intense whiteness of the sun, illuminating the grey walls of his castle in an unforgiving, unrelenting brightness. No—none were coming.

Feeling more alone than ever, Dallas went searching for a new sword. Obviously he would need one. The dragons probably knew this, and that was why they weren't coming. Dallas found one among the leaves fallen from an old oak tree, a solid weapon, only slightly crooked, and comfortable to hold, with only a few knobby bits. Definitely worthy for dragon slaying....