

## Haute Couture

*after an Untitled Painting by Joan Kirkman*

I want to be the woman  
in the purple kimono  
beside the irises, with  
her bare leg drawn up

I want that look on my face-  
peaceful humor, looking  
past herself with  
open arms.

I want the wild  
reds and oranges  
of the rug and walls  
to surround me  
and be that cool center  
in the midst of all the heat.

~ Tia Hudson

## Still Life with Lilacs and Woman in Chair

*after a painting by Joan Kirkman*

This woman is beside herself.  
If she leaves the table  
heading to the Bon Marche  
to cluster illustrations  
of tiered chiffon  
and covered buttons  
several perfect blossoms  
will have begun to brown  
by the time she returns home.  
She is on catalog deadline  
and the Seattle Times needs  
a full-page fashion spread  
for the Sunday Women's pages.

In fact, the artist  
must have painted lilacs first  
or brought in a fresh bouquet later  
to paint perishables in a single day  
after prepping cobalt lines  
of draping tablecloth.  
Purple is sister to such indigo  
and mother to lavender.  
She isn't looking at the garden  
inside her home,  
her Maytime reverie.  
She has caught the scent  
of matching beauty and breath.

~ Mary Ellen Talley

*no more nudes*

For me that male gaze  
    lingering on nipples  
    prying between thighs  
        feels fingering inside my body on the canvas.  
I am unmoved by historic precedent  
considering those many women stuck  
as muse not painter.

Instead I watch Morris Graves' sharp-beaked birds  
    one wren whips  
    her head around to eye  
    me on this slatted bench trying not to hear  
        the museum amblers musing  
            which lunch    next shop    more ice cream  
until chatter chatter increases  
and I must fly back to the hotel.

~ Linera Lucas

## Interpretation

*after Morris Graves', "Spirit Bird" 1950, tempera on paper*

Spirit Bird crouches,  
looks back, eyes as wide  
as full white moons.

She knows to be on the lookout –  
left, north, up...her spirit depending  
on her vigilance and sense of smell.

Spirit Bird is one in a long line with fox,  
snake, whale, and coyote...keeping the world  
alive, along with 36 good men.

Seeing deserts and dried-up lakes, she calls  
every fox, snake, whale, coyote, bear, cedar, wave...  
and all good women and men *now now now...*

~ Susan Landgraf

## Spirit Bird

*after a painting by Morris Graves, 1950*

Tell me Winged Shaman, what ails you?

In the forest, I hear your lispings hiss—a warning.

I see you, shoulders hunched, watching me watch you.

Tell me of the crushing weight you carry.

Your feet, large, talons extended, tell me

they grip the earth to save it.

Wise One, your eyes blind with worry,

tell me what you see.

Is it glaciers melting, flooding the seas?

Is it Orca, her belly full of plastic bags; her baby dead beside her?

Is it a brown mother reaching—her child torn from her arms,

carried screaming to a waiting cage?

Is it trees falling, forests burning

earth's tender crust raped for her riches?

Your silent eyes tell me

*It is all of that and more.*

~ Beverly Osband

# Wanderings

*after William Cumming's, Return to Odysseus: Tribute to Nikos Kazantzakis*

Tell me muse, of that man  
who wandered far and wide,  
that cunning hero blown off course  
again and again.

Tell me that ancient story of  
shipwrecked friendships,  
abandoned families,  
heedless lust,  
fools destroyed by recklessness.

I have so many questions, muse,  
about their modern journey.

Tell me about that weary man,  
that one sitting on the bench,  
ignoring the mother and child off to his right.

Tell me about the two friends walking together,  
and the hulk in the bulky blue jacket.

Is the guy with the golden bag gathering or scattering?

Is that lovely Iphigenia playing volleyball?

Will Argos the dog recognize his master?

Tell me, muse, of each disjointed figure,  
all their meandering journeys.

Will their sufferings ever end?

Muse, stretch out your wings,

fly across the canvas;

tell the tale once more in our time.

*~ Teresa Gillespie, 2019*

Barbara (c) 2007

Dark sullen woman walks a few feet behind  
she could keep up but chooses not to  
her navy trench and black boots once  
a statement now disguise who she is  
someone's mother, grandmother, aunt,  
wife, sister, daughter when she was Babs  
she is alone, not lonely, just independent  
walking through the fear of life as it disappears

~ J. L. Wright



MOTHER COLOR

*inspired by the art of Joan Kirkman,*

*after Ursula K. Le Guin*

Mother color, omnipresent, multitudinous,  
descanting across canvases  
in upswelling umbers, ambers, ochres, roar  
of iris indigoes, mimic of Kandinsky pinks and greens,  
enchantment of chartreuse ruses,  
and minor scales of royal blues:  
surround us. Synchronize us  
with your immeasurable emissions  
to hum, to hear, to harmonize,  
to respect all prisms in our eyes.

~ Pamela Hobart Carter