

**2012 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest  
First Prize: Lian Zhu**

**Gustav Klimt**

She appears, fractals of modernity in the classical blues and greens  
Of the landscape of his oil paintings,  
A brush of red lips, gold necklace, a silver of sliver  
Earring dangles on her white pearl of skin.  
She looks as if set ablaze, her with her loud laughs  
And kind eyes, so out of place in the landscape of oily personalities  
And smothered smiles, and they all smiled at him.

She spoke to him, with her solid musical tonality,  
With a lyric frankness, and mischievous glimmers of truth,  
And didn't care that much for his academic conservative engravings.  
And he, with his wide eyes, saw her, saw her  
Fractals of art  
In discordance with his conversations and the people who  
Might as well be paintings all around her, flushes of  
prepared beauty, when they were all cloistered around her, flooding the floor,  
He saw her.

Her light blues mixed with sliver, with the gold of her skin, her quick gestures,  
The laughing lips that teased his tense mouth.  
And he found himself gasping, grasping for the brushes of deep sapphires, for gold leaves,  
For intonations of sliver, echos of her that he could feel on his skin.  
As the sun sets outside on the Vienna streets and playfully touches his figures with its reds and  
purples,  
He looks for her,  
Not in the lantern-lit streets where she walks,  
The bed that she sleeps in at night, a room of her own with her paintings and books,  
Nor in the crowds of the dancing, raucous company he used to keep.

Throwing his windows open to the rolling night breezes,  
He quietly sets sail towards her through his paintings,  
He drenches her hair with auburn and weaves them with flowers,  
Cloaks her in a robe of gold, her bare feet touch a metallic field.  
He closes her eyes, and standing still admires the quiet boldness with which she exists.  
(he can't keep her though, not even in this patterned place)

And so the painted folds himself forward elegantly, eagerly, bending  
Down towards her clasped petals, brushing the light skin of her cheek,  
While she folded turns  
Away from him, lifts her closed glimmering face towards the painter  
Silently looking with his brushes.

The painter Klimt captures this moment, because this is the more subtle, more artistic,  
Unlike another moment, where she, too bright for this world,  
Kisses him, unfolding herself messily, startlingly,  
Red lips and gold are everywhere, pigments of silver sticking to his skin.  
Gustav captures not that flesh-toned sunset  
Because that moment is far too real, far too intimate,  
For his patterned boyish painter frankness.

## Dimensions

In yesterdays, just a few squares on our calendar, collections of hours ago,  
I pulled my gray-purple sweatshirt on over my white shirt,  
And sat down across from you,  
You, pulling tomatoes and eggs out from nowhere  
My finger tracing the Spanish blue tiles on the countertop  
Band of gold against the dark blue,  
It's 3am, I'm hungry,  
Your face had kissed my shoulder on the couch, nudged me towards the kitchen,  
Away from my blanket of angst  
and now, again, anger subsides into another hello how are you  
and a smile.  
Stealing a tomato, twirling a fork, I'm your friend again  
Smiling our way back into that same familiar place of baseball caps and cheery music  
by the way Sam, did Mark tell you that Em said yes?

Smile, because you're steady, a slow wave, prone to mistakes, sure,  
But I doubt you'll ever crash headlong into a foreign shore,  
Won't drown heartedly, melt into someone I don't know.

And we are two flat, two-dimensional figures looking at each other  
Across the space of this white and blue kitchen.  
Me, dark bangs and messy hair, clinging to layers of sweaters,  
Wonders about our third dimensions  
Behind your capable build and your grey t-shirt.  
And how we never see these planes of each other,  
Because it's not like a metaphor of layers  
But a matter of the dimensions we are able to sense,  
The sheets that we choose to sleep between  
On the nights that we can't sleep.

There's a Berlin wall of books and clippings in my third dimension,  
A ceaseless analogy of verbs and nouns  
Pictures, sunsets, sentiments rising and falling  
Dashing themselves into pieces on some shoreline with passionate force  
And then recollecting, solemnly, calmly,  
Quietly ebbing and flowing back out into the still so that they can  
Do it all again.

It's funny how I asked you, probed you,  
Because I saw how she looked at you last night (her in that black fitted dress)  
if you'll be there  
In all of my tomorrows.

Because I honestly couldn't tell you right now

In my third dimension  
Whether I am here now,  
In all of your todays.  
(Or if a part of me is still in a bookstore talking with him.)  
– I still do love you.

And I honestly can't decide which would be worse,  
For you to cheat in the first two dimensions,  
Or me, cheating in the third.

## **Waltzing to the Blues**

Hey there, hey friend, yes you,  
Don't you see that big moon, giant gob of whipped cream  
That it is  
And a sprinkling of something, pop rocks maybe  
Like stars, and you say to me who are you.

I'm sorry I'm late,  
But the stairs to your room,  
They wind and bend  
And god it took a little longer than I had planned  
To see you swaying above the floorboards.

First the strings, then the blues  
And then we dance, alternating leads  
Alternating steps, tripping all over each other  
Just like before.

I pull my hair back, throw a serious expression on my face  
While you toss your head back  
And laugh  
And laugh.  
How we just seem to lose everything in this place.

Your eyes, they light up, particles without gravity,  
And mine, they flood the air, heavy like waves,  
How silly it is when they meet,  
Turning downwards and up,  
Into valleys of brown and onto ridges of blue.

So friend, you're not shy,  
Let's take a ride, throw open that blue Cadillac door  
And let us chase that gob of whipped cream  
That is the moon  
Us laughing and stumbling, waltzing,  
To the blues.

## **Anachronism of Your Tomorrows**

Dark eyes wandering, searching,  
Holding tightly onto ephemeral words  
Small hands clutching paper, wearing it down, creasing  
It until it ceases to be read in too many places.  
Bookmarks held the place  
Of laughter and a few tears, warmth on the ear,  
A hand following the curve of the back,  
White shirt hugging cardboard boxes,  
Drowning in the sunlight,  
In the loneliness of being  
An anachronism of your tomorrows.

These eyes used to be browner, and brighter, softer  
Like a glint of a pearl earring, petals to the lips, those lips to your cheek.  
Because I loved your bright sunny days, your red checkered tablecloths,  
The opening of your car door, watching the sunset hit that old church with  
Elizabethan architecture, regal reds and oranges draping its walls.  
It, solid and lonely, a beauty among disheartened streets,  
It, with so much heart.  
Now so out of place; because gone are the golden days  
When sentiments meandered through the streets.

I recall my last words (before I left) over and over.  
The lines flowed under and under  
me falling and rolling, feeling so much, overwhelmed  
Into incomprehensible waves of emotion, but alas, my friend  
You were just so beautiful. And so I stayed there awhile, lingered  
there (for just a little while).  
I delayed, folding and unfolding, while the clock ticked away the minutes,  
And I counted each minute,  
Held them,  
And felt so out of place, out of pace,  
Brilliantly, subtly lonely in this world full of time and ticking clocks,  
Draped in the loneliness of being an anachronism  
Of my tomorrows.

## Sunrise at Night

Lying below the cosmological universe  
He raised his head, drew a line with his limbs  
Broke through the line and fell into her, plunged into  
Another dimension, and heard her breathing.

He loved how she understood space-time  
How she saw the world as he did, with wonderment, and  
With irrefutable joy, she demanded to know, was determined  
To see, the waves in light flooding her waist, to pour that same light through slits  
And find particles of sand. She thrived on that kind of uncertainty, stretching her  
Arms outwards, pointing her toes, she dances into the gravitational fields of planets  
Looming above their heads as he watched.

Like attracts like. He, a lover of science, and her  
Science itself, steady waves of thoughts, packets of writing  
That she packed away neatly with a smile.  
Each morning he constructs his world equation by equation,  
As she opens her wide eyes, building the universe like choreographing a dance,  
Stretching her limbs outwards to the horizon, feeling out the edges of theory,  
And the equations slowly become just another language for communicating  
The many observable faces of nature that she sees.

She was an observable phenomenon, he was the observer.  
And as he brushes against her, as they murmur about her day in the lab and post it notes,  
With her ponytail hair hanging over her shoulder, even now,  
He looks at her with wonder and  
With irrefutable joy, again he demands to know, is determined  
To see, that which lies within her, that drives her.

He touches her, whispers questions in her ear, curiosity moving him closer to her answers.  
She smiles at him, wide eyes scrutinizing the dark sky  
Scanning her thoughts, she turns to him and speaks of sunrises.

Later that night, mapping the planets' movements in her head, looking for her notebook,  
She gives him the landscape that is their heavenly ceiling, reforming observations with her  
tongue into equations so that he might feel it too.  
Through the lenses of her poetic eyes, he finally sees, breathless,  
The movement of light and gravitational fields, nature's cells coalescing elegantly into humanity.

And content the curious boy forgets about the wide eyed girl,  
Forgets that she is wide eyed because she misplaced something somewhere,  
And that dancing alone in a studio at night,  
She looks for sunrises to drench the expansive world that she has built with gold  
To drench the barracks of lonely lost souls with the sound of voices.