Literary Landscapes

Poetry inspired by art in the exhibition Liberating Landscapes

April 2020
About this chapbook

LITERARY LANDSCAPES – THE POETRY

This book of poetry is the result of a collaboration between the Museum of Northern Arizona and the advanced poetry class at Northern Arizona University. For the second year in a row, NAU Professor Andie Francis has assigned her advanced poetry students to visit a spring exhibition at the Museum of Northern Arizona and write a poem responded to a piece of art. This type of poetry, called ekphrastic poetry, is intended to amplify and expand the meaning of the art.

In 2019, the poems were displayed in the museum beside the artwork during April, which is National Poetry Month. Unfortunately, this year just days after the exhibition Liberating Landscape opened at the museum, both the museum and university closed down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since neither the poems nor the art can be viewed at the museum for the time being, we decided to offer them together as this downloadable chapbook.

LIBERATING LANDSCAPE – THE ART

All the art featured in this chapbook is part of the Liberating Landscape exhibition, which features works from the Museum of Northern Arizona collection created by six women artists from 1900 to 1940. These women were inspired and empowered by the dramatic landscapes of the American Southwest and took the lead in developing the arts of the region. The exhibition includes pottery by Nampeyo, photographs by Kate Cory, and paintings, etchings and drawings by Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton, Nora Lucy Mowbray Cundell, Harriet Morton Holmes, and Lillian Wilhelm Smith.

The Liberating Landscape exhibition will remain on view through summer 2020.

POEMS INSPIRED BY ART

Hidden Loveliness by Penny Trunzo
San Francisco Peaks from Cameron by Lillian Wilhelm

Hued archway by Katherine Green
Rainbow Bridge – Upstream View by Lillian Wilhelm

This “Desert Scene” Pairs well with Barefoot Moscato by Ash Lohmann
Desert Scene by Harriet Morton Holmes

God Lives in a Desert Church by Madalyne Linder
Church at Rancho de Taos by Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton

From Above by Justin Coffey
Sityatki Revival Style Jar by Nampeyo

Shelter by Taylor Sage
Woman and Child, Moqui by Kate Cory

Beautiful by Kaylie Escobar
Sepionium Hopi by Lillian Wilhelm

Sitting For A Portrait Before The Rest Of Life by TheresaJean Herleth
Rachel Pearl Wilson by Lillian Wilhelm Smith

What Power Exists Behind Eyes by Bridgette Brados
Photograph by Kate Cory

Our Imagined Memories by Emma Winn
A View of Mission Ruins by Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton

In the Heat of the Day by Summer Hale
Navajo Shepherdess by Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton

Sheep in Cedars by Theodore Walka
Sheep in Cedars by Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton

Night Fire by Karla Habbershaw
A Navajo Dance by Firelight by Lillian Wilhelm Smith

Nocturne by Aubrey Clark
Walpi by Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton

Balance by Niklas Silveira
Hopi Weaver by Kate Cory

The Giver by Helena Schall
Hopi Weaver by Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton
Hidden Loveliness

The incessant desert landscape spans towards
The mountains yearning for the moisture from
Higher lands far on the blue horizon to travel over.

The plants, animals and people find
Solace from the beat of the harsh Sun in
Shade provided only by tenacious trees.

All must hope the Kachinas will soon
Wash the rains over the dry sands and rush
Towards the Pinyons, Junipers, and the Three Sisters.

All rely on the rare and tiny water droplets for
Strength to rise from loose and rocky soils and to
Make succulent life under the Sun’s powerful beat.

The desert is no easy place to survive and a home
Here Is only found by those with skin as tough as
A sunbaked lizard and a heart big enough to know

Plenty waits to be found within the cracks and
Atop the mesas of this barren façade.

San Francisco Peaks from Cameron
Lillian Wilhelm
Oil on canvas, 1925
Museum of Northern Arizona
C1631
Hued archway

two formations of rock
joined together
to form one
in a hug of a
celebration of nature
to embrace the Earth

hidden behind the
mountains and
plateaus
hidden inside
a pocket of a
canyon
an arch
pointing to the end where
a pot of gold awaits

are the riches itself

a rock full of rainbow
colors
a place where serenity
flows up and down stream
like the oil on a canvas
capturing the
calm
timelessness
of river rock rainbows

BY KATHERINE GREEN
This “Desert Scene” Pairs Well with Barefoot Moscato

You’ve heard greens and mauves will meld to a melodic haze yet to you, the desert is still a brutal place. The unforgiving shape of sinning.

But have you smelled desert in winter? It’s a beautifully breathy citrus kiss, saccharine of what you learn to love. Like the tangerine toned breeze Ornamenting either end of desert days.

It reminds you why cowboys hum the blues before the blue toned hues of a cool desert sky— wide to solemnized minds so, you must sit and think while you sit and drink your mother’s bottle of Barefoot Moscato that you’ll reimburse with water once it’s drained three quarters because you moved to the desert at fifteen and hadn’t see a friend for the miles dry heat warped the landscape but you had seen a cactus for every time you wished you were dead.

But I tell you to hold out for the crisp notes of winter desert. It smells sweet like what you learn to love. Like Barefoot Moscato and the blues please hold out for its mild mellow hues.

Desert Scene

Harriet Morton Holmes
Aquatint on paper, c. 1930s
Museum of Northern Arizona
C755

BY ASH LOHMANN
God Lives in a Desert Church

A big, beige building, there are no windows, there is no door there is no heart to even beat.
He was born here, the desert holds his hands throughout the days, while all the people ache outside, Who resides inside? He just sits alone amongst the cold, deserted concrete; he knows it too well, he has become it. Waiting for nothing in particular, upon each sunrise and each sunset, a new sky he will never see. I wonder if I will die here too.

Church at Rancho de Taos

Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton
Watercolor on paper, 1918
Museum of Northern Arizona C867
From Above

The mouth of the vessel, seems a portal
From this earthen gateway emerges beauty

We are left to wonder what worlds it divides
Ours and the next, or ours and the last.

Its beauty is contrast, of red, of black, of white
Of symmetry, four corners, four worlds

Perhaps the portal is to the fifth,
If this world is to end.

Each corner, each world, Inhabited by fluid forms
Like wind, or water, or breath, like life

Banded, held together, by four banners or arms
Like the cardinal directions, North and South, East and West

This vessel reflects the world, another symmetry
The overview effect in scale, like Earth a vessel full of life

Reminding us to treat this world as this vessel,
Beautiful and Fragile.

*Sikyatki Revival Style Jar*

Nampeyo
Ceramic, c. 1900-1930

Museum of Northern Arizona
E76
Shelter

I carried you for nine months
I felt you grow inside of me, felt your every movement
I sacrificed my body, my beauty, all for you
I gave you life.

I carry you now, on my back
I show you the world from a safe distance, all the hate, the beauty
I aid you in sickness and laugh along with you in happiness
We watch, together, as the world changes.

I feel your breath, hot on my shoulder
your tears as they run down your cheek
You are heavier, stronger, wiser
I watch as you grow, I am proud of the life I gave you.

Stay here, child, I will keep you safe
Wrapped in the red blanket my mother made for me
which I pass on to you
You will stay safe, my child

We will stay safe, as long as we are together.

Woman and Child, Moqui
Kate Cory
Oil on canvas, c. 1906-1912
Museum of Northern Arizona
C2803

BY TAYLOR SAGE
Beautiful

I am beautiful and strong
A baby,
For myself, what’s my purpose in life?
A doctor
A lawyer
Even a teacher
Could it be the reason

I am beautiful and strong
A child not knowing
For myself, I go to school
Learning
Reading in book and books
Children’s laughter
I know the unknown
A teacher

I am beautiful and strong
A teenager knowing
For myself, I go to school
Watching others talk
Teachers giving me lessons
About Education

I am beautiful and Strong
An adult not knowing
For myself, I work
A teacher
I am strong
Willing to know
I can educate others
And Myself
I am strong
And beautiful

Sepionium Hopi

Lillian Wilhelm
Watercolor on paper, c. 1930

Museum of Northern Arizona
C1575

BY KAYLIE ESCOBAR
Sitting For A Portrait
Before The Rest Of Life

quiet anxiety and
pause
holding herself
behind her stone eyes

pins and needles searing
through the stillness
she holds

her golden hair stands
bright in rebellion of
the dark she
grips

with bone white knuckles
just below where
the canvas catches

the future presses itself
into her chest
burrowing through her mind
she sits
still
dressed up

for the growth
she will face

she will become herself
entirely different from the her
caught by canvas today

the quiet anxiety burrows
in change

Rachel Pearl Wilson
Lillian Wilhelm Smith
Watercolor on paper, c. 1918

Museum of Northern Arizona
IL2019-105-1

BY TERESA JEAN HERLETH
What Power Exists Behind Eyes

butte brow
halfed bun
tied up tight
  a girl to open
lungs and eyes
  to day’s bright
averted pyre
  but lend in light
with no end
  edge’s blur;
through what great window weeps light
  —her.

Kate Cory
Photograph

Museum of Northern Arizona
MS-208-75-776N
Our Imagined Memories:
a Game of “Baby Coyote’ in Mission Ruins

How to Make-Believe:

Howl out,

Where are you, baby coyote?
and then
Arh-wooooo!

I. A Child Again

A girl is not really a coyote—

in oil azure and
ochre i hear a light call
my dad’s lively cry
see him in the walls
bright memory in mortar
shadow-shaped, his face
i can remember
keen excitement of running
behind the rubble
giggling, the exciting game
of hide-and-seek sought again
by this inner-child

want to lose myself in this painted maze
howl like I never have, unspoken prayer

Where are you, baby coyote?
and then
Arh-wooooo!

II. A Living Mission

A painting is not really a ruin—

timid footsteps on
dusty floors echo throughout
this silent body
bare skeleton of
bricks building pillars
possibilities
sunshine pours honey
yellow ink, blue in its wake
from reverent skies
once again your laughs
sacred to my weary heart
bring place alive again

golden light a blessing which casts off shadows
days between moments of playing pretend

Where are you, baby coyote?
and answer
Arh-wooooo!

The sunburn smells like aloe already
Recollection eclipses illusion.

BY EMMA WINN
In the Heat of the Day

Specs of burning painless fire from bottom up in surges of beautiful through otherworldly images of dancing waves slowly blowing waves through moving air drops of sweat flow down trickling wiped from the brow in the heat of day

Navajo Shepherdess

Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton Oil on canvas, 1918

Museum of Northern Arizona C869
Sheep look like ghosts
In evening light.
Herds of phantoms
Wispy and scattered
Across the hillside
Like dandelion seeds
In autumn,
When the last few flowers
On the lawn
Cling to hard earth
Browning grass
Until they let go,
Spectral
Translucent
Against sunset,
To the breeze,
Or to a child’s wish.
Night hangs in the sky heavy, shining a turquoise gleam. The sun is long gone but remembered. Fire burns bright and high. Flames ripple into the ether, embers fly out into the cold night. Like a geode, the night is torn open. Light bounces, and refracts. Jumping from the fire’s source to adorning jewelry, to faces of Navajos dancing by firelight. Night is not calm and cold and lonely, it is a swirling extension, evolving energies, grounded amongst people. They move together to beats remembered through generations. My family, my mother, my sisters and I, dance in the kitchen to oldies from my mother’s childhood. The kettle sings, water boils, and soup simmers. Heat radiates from flames of the stove, and heat radiates from our bodies as we bounce to rhythm. Cold winter nights, around smoky campfires. My family reminds me “smoke follows beauty”. I blink to clear smoke from my eyes as they tear up. I am rewarded by the beauty of the glowing moon. A dark canvas sky glowing with the light of millions of far off stars. Stars that remind of beauty in flame, wisdom with ageing, scale in this vast universe that we share.
Nocturne

“Today I am reminded that I will soon be there, as free as the vast plains and the vast sky once more in close kinship with everything animate & inanimate”

- Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton

what does it mean to strive? to hope? to dream?
what does it mean to take those dreams too far?

blessed, and guided, and cared for, our people return the favor,
careful to remember that we emerged and may just as well decline

maybe it’s a spiral, my thoughts,
but they think too much of themselves,
think they’re worth more than this vast land we were given.

they were given all they needed and beyond,
yet are ungrateful
they squandered and wasted the sustenance on their greed,
and then crawled back to the Earth, begging for help, blaming anyone but themselves.

we did not earn this, for we cannot earn the Earth
she is a gift.
guided here,
but we still fight for our place,
lands and greed pressing in, pushing out.
she is compassionate on the ungrateful,
but we are angry at the treatment of the Earth.
she runs out to greet them and accepts them once more,
but we know that there may come a time when
there is nothing left for her to give.
and she will fade,
and they will fade,
and we will fade.

for now, we gather, hiking upward with my sister,
carrying our blessings and thanking the Earth for all she has given to us.
we are amazed by her beauty and thankful for the opportunity to be one,
even if it’s fleeting.

and in the candlelight, we continue our circular dance, in sync with each other and the Earth,
a testament to our people’s priorities and adoration,
a trust that our faithful love will be rewarded.

BY AUBREY CLARK
Balance

All things living must thrive within a medium
Support and uplift through trials and strife
Lest we all succumb to decadent abandonment
Allowing puerile differences their reign

There be enough for all on this wondrous planet
Our glorious Earth which bequeaths luxuries befitting union
To live connected, linked by threads binding us in our universe
Each of us contingent on Earth’s resource repertoire

Yet we lack restraint, dividing when we can equilibrise
Ravishing about a gluttonous appetite over conservation
In haste we drive the planet’s hide into a barren wasteland
Watching not for future generations, only momentary bliss

Possibly we can reunify beyond profit
Overcome the monetary stigma on life
Allow our children brilliant green fields
And their children’s children a home

I do not have all the answers
Nor I the power to change our past
But hope do I for a better world
Progress toward harmony

Too long have I watched us butcher one another
Too long have I cried as we deface Earth’s majesty
Here I shall sit
And create while others destroy
Reclaim balance in this tumultuous world
Remove corrosion with elegance

If we do not change, then loss shall we be
If we do not change, then failure is what we are
If we do not take charge, then degrade we will
If we do not reunify, then apart shall we wither

BY NIKLAS SILVEIRA

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Hopi Weaver
Kate Cory
Oil on canvas, c. 1906-1912
Museum of Northern Arizona
C2810
The Giver

Cold-hearted floor touches bare feet
Knees rub across the ground
while fingers create
tapestries of a truth-shaped masterpiece.
Petrifying hardship remains of
Hours, days or months
Every fibre of his body
shatters illusions
dominates technology
and fills the world
with Serapes,
vibrant and wondrous
metamorphosis is truly a beautiful thing to witness.

Blessed by nature’s gifts
using hands to create,
no help from machines
but with beautiful upright looms
is how artisans fabricate
an ocean of coloured rugs and blankets
in all the hues possible to imagine
to fight off any imbalance
to see beyond any shades of grey
and keeps simplicity at bay.

Hopi Weaver
Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton
Ink on board, 1933
Museum of Northern Arizona
C785A
BRIDGETTE BRADOS

Bridgette Brados will graduate with a degree in English Creative Writing from Northern Arizona University in May 2020. She will continue her poetry studies in the Fall at the University of Michigan, Helen Zell Writer’s Program. When she is not reading poetry, you can find her tending to various gardens around Flagstaff, AZ.

AUBREY CLARK

Aubrey Clark is in her third year at NAU. She is pursuing a B.A. in English with a certificate in Creative Writing, a B.S. in Strategic Communication with an emphasis on Public Relations, and a minor in International Communication. Her short docufiction was presented at a premiere in Groningen, the Netherlands while she lived abroad. After graduation, she intends to teach English abroad while continuing to tell stories through writing, photography, and film.

JUSTIN COFFEY

Justin Coffey was raised on the South Rim of Grand Canyon before moving to Flagstaff to work and pursue higher education. He is currently attending NAU seeking a Bachelors in Computer Science with a minor in both English and Biology. He has written poetry since he was a child and has pursued education in both writing and science voraciously. He sees art and science as a means to expand understanding.

KARLA HABBERSHAW

Karla Habbershaw is a senior studying English, Creative Writing and Communication Studies at Northern Arizona University. In addition to her studies, Karla works at the NAU Art Museum, and has a healthy fascination with the visual arts.

SUMMER HALE

Summer Hale is a junior at Northern Arizona University studying English with a University Certification in Literature; she is also getting her minors in French and Women’s and Gender Studies. Summer intends on going to graduate school to pursue her PhD in Literature after her graduation in May of 2021.

TERESAJEAN HERLETH

TeresaJean Herleth is a junior at Northern Arizona University and will graduate in May of 2021. She is double majoring in English and Mathematics. She is the author of the nonfiction essay “How to Imagine a Point” which is included on the website “In the Style Of”. She currently works as a Peer Math Assistant for the Academic Success Center at Northern Arizona University. In her job, Herleth tutors students in Calculus 3 on a walk in basis. After graduation Herleth plans to get a Master’s degree, most likely at the University of Arizona.

KAYLIE ESCOBAR

Kaylie attends Northern Arizona University; she’s majoring in English, American Sign Language and earning two certificates in Rhetoric and Creative Writing. She graduates in May. Her future plan is to become a Sign Language Interpreter. She has a poem published in a book, and wants to publish a book named Deafintely in the near future, along with other short stories about Deaf Culture and the community.

KATHERINE GREEN

Katherine Green is in her junior year at NAU. She is an English and Psychological Sciences dual major, with a certificate in creative writing and a certificate in linguistics. After graduation in May 2021, she plans to get her MFA in creative writing.
MADALYNE LINDER

Madalyne is a senior at Northern Arizona University studying English with an emphasis in Creative Writing. She writes poetry and fiction, sometimes mixing the two. She finds inspiration in all aspects of daily life, as well as through other authors and poets such as Ottessa Moshfegh, Anne Sexton and Richard Siken. Within her poetry, she emphasizes the importance of setting and tends to write a mix of both lyrical and narrative poems.

ASH LOHMANN

Ash Lohmann is a Junior studying creative writing at Northern Arizona University’s Honors College. She is an editor at Misguided Magazine and the features editor at The Lumberjack Newspaper. Additionally, Lohmann published her poetry in The Tunnels and has competed in The Flagstaff Poetry Slam. After she graduates in the spring of 2021, Lohmann intends to pursue her MFA.

TAYLOR SAGE

Taylor Sage is a senior at Northern Arizona University graduating in May of 2020. She is an English major and has a certificate in creative writing. She enjoys writing flash fiction and poetry. After graduation, Sage plans on pursuing a master’s of teaching degree with an emphasis in secondary education and a special education credential.

HELENA SCHALL

Helena Schall is in her year fifth year at the Technical University of Dortmund with a major in Applied Literary and Cultural Studies as well as minors in Political Science and History. Currently she is completing her semester abroad at Northern Arizona University. Schall is prepared to finish her Bachelor in 2021 and then pursuing a master’s in political science with a special focus on politics and religion. She writes about political, social and environmental issues.

NIKLAS SILVEIRA

Niklas Silveira is a junior at NAU double majoring in History and English with an emphasis in creative writing is. He is an up and coming author who writes both poetry and fiction. After graduating in May 2021, he plans to seek his MFA in creative writing.

PENNY TRUNZO

Penny Trunzo is a Senior at NAU graduating with an English degree emphasized in creative writing. She is currently working on two creative writing capstone projects in poetry and in non-fiction. After graduation she plans to further her education and become and English educator.

THEODORE WALKA

Theodore Walka is a junior at NAU. He is majoring in English with a minor in Spanish. Though Theo has yet to publish any of his work, he loves poetry and regularly writes in his spare time, just for fun. He lives in Flagstaff and works as an emergency medical technician and security guard for Flagstaff Ranch.

EMMA WINN

Emma Winn is in her third year at NAU. She is majoring in English with an emphasis in creative writing and literature, and is also minoring in Classical Studies, Political Science, and Studio Art. Emma is a recipient of the 2019 Hooper Undergraduate Research Award for her collection of environmental creative nonfiction, poetry, and art. She is a fiction editor and founding member of the undergraduate literary magazine, Sonder Magazine. After graduating in December 2020, Emma hopes to pursue an MFA in creative writing at the University of Arizona.