

ALONSOVILLE VOICE

“IT’S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD”



IN THIS ISSUE

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DENNIS GRAY

ALONSOVILLE
POETS & ARTISTS

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FEATURED

The Ballad of Dennis Gray
Artist and Craftsman

DAVID BOLTON

Took a ride through Pigtown, once full of Germans and Irish and Jews, traveled back in time with my good friend Dennis Gray... showed me the haunts of childhood, the grade school, ball fields, stockyards where they rode cows, piers where farmers dropped off crops, railroads, a second-hand shop with artifacts from past industries, up and down streets, pointed out a two-foot wide path between buildings, how he'd shimmy up and down, playing ball on sandlots and parks, how he'd drop off lunch at the B&O, handing it through the window to his blacksmith grandfather, a self-contained world, not all peaches and cream, carried a knife in middle school, fights and rumbles, spotless streets and alleys, swallows circling chimneys, a skeleton of an 18th century building, blackened from the fire, yet defiantly stands, thanks to the thickness of the beams, everywhere you turn there's a piece of the past, the bricks, stained glass, painted screens, the house he grew up in, two stories, no more than 13 feet wide, you got by on less back then.

Enter 10th grade at Catonsville, another world 4 miles up the road, enjoyed art class but teach didn't like him 'cause the kid wouldn't follow directions, flunked English too, "something strange, couldn't remember spelling words, could do it, but as soon as I walked away, all gone," worked for Robert Hall, packing away clothing, 90 cents an hour, bought an Austin Healy Sprite, weekends spent auto-crossing, sport car rallies, winning plaques. Come graduation in '66, best friend drafted into the Marines. "Scared the hell out of me."

Tried to be a conscientious objector, thrown out of draft board, checked reserves & National Guard, not a spot to be found, took Military Occupation Specialty test, scored high, could have any job, chose the medical field, shipped off to Fort Sam Houston for training, "put in for Germany and got the Aberdeen Proving Grounds," in '67 reassigned to Hawaii, rode a troop ship to Vietnam, ended up in Duc Pho, part of a battalion below the DMZ, helicopter landing zone near rice paddy, two weeks later Tet offensive explodes, "pulled guard duty," screw the Geneva Convention, slept behind barb wire with a case of grenades and machine gun belts, built out "a wood shithouse," helicopter nearly lands on tent, sleds catch shithouse and tip it over. "Scary as hell!"

Worst were napalm victims, had to pull off burnt skin. "Body liquid permeates everything," treated all kinds: Koreans, soldiers from the Republic of Vietnam, even Vietcong, used to scrub in for operations, once carried an amputated leg, oops! limb on ground, still picture "hairs blowing in the wind." Wasn't all bad, got a call from the troops, needed a medavac for pregnant lady, doc ordered elsewhere. "How did I do this? Catch, clamp, cut and clean out the nostrils," a magical moment for the 20-year-old.

Two years, ten months and four days pass, Spec 5 Dennis Gray returned to Baltimore with a passion for photography, developed own film on base; lots of jobs and gigs, bartender at No Fish Today, making false teeth, carving ebony, cocobolo and padauk pipes; woodworking led to furniture design, lots of renovations in Charm City, taught himself to be a craftsman, on to the Walters Art Gallery, assistant cabinet maker, sold his coin collection to open a shop, in between, trips to Smith Island, countless photos, the impressionist painter Rubin a mentor, Dennis into sculpture, crafted Makala, an African game, partners in manufacturing, his creation went national, walked away from it, "didn't have business sense."

Continued on page 3...

David Bolton

Writer,
Editor &
Bon Vivant

writeventures@gmail.com

Sara Pak

Newsletter Designer &
Dog Photo Judge

ksarapak@gmail.com

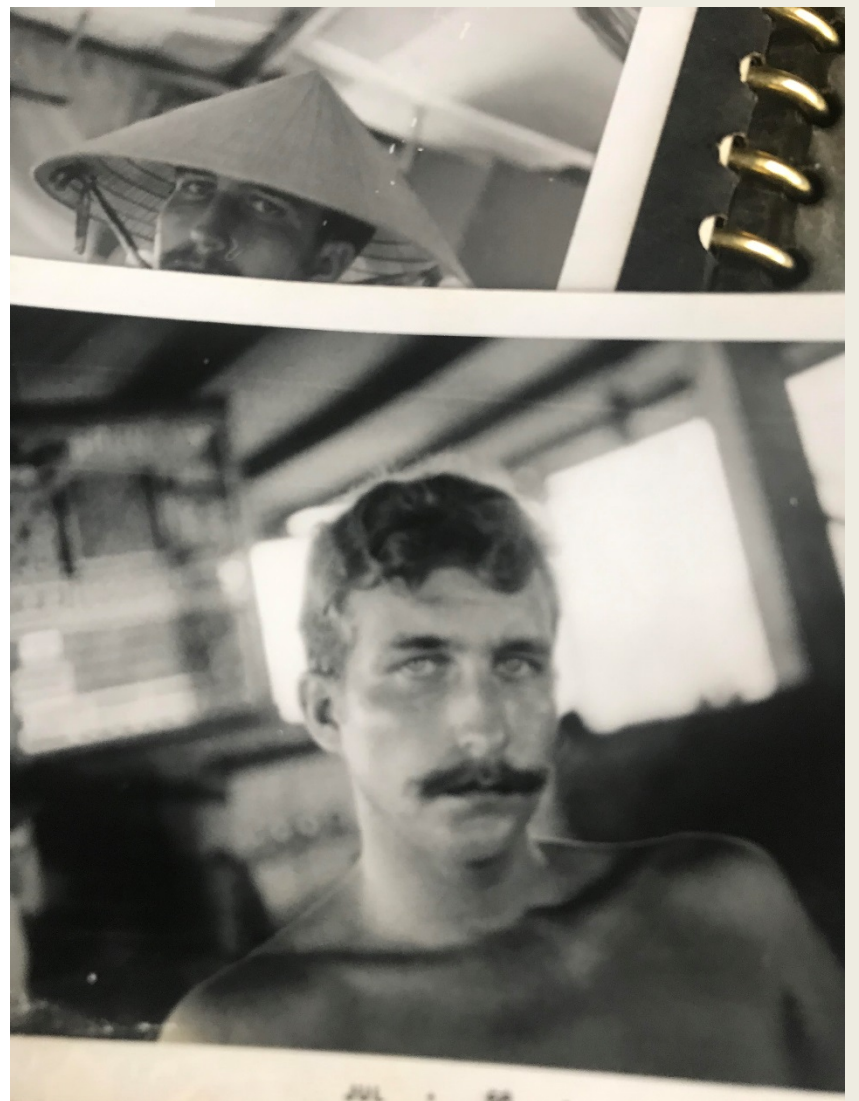
Listserv issues?

Contact James Stevenson,
james.m.stevenson@gmail.com

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Dennis Gray, age 21

FROM THE KESWICK ARCHIVES

Once Upon a Time

A soft-drink truck lost its brakes (he claimed) and sped down the hill from Charles Street and crashed into a train, which had stopped at Cold Spring Lane. The accident knocked the train off the track, but it was winched back on and continued to York, PA, (late) before returning to its Baltimore station.

~Tom Bracken, who had lived with his wife Addie at 4413 Atwick for 54 years at the time of this writing in '99.

Taken from Keswick's History Notebook.

COVER IMAGE is "Abstract" by Dennis Gray



“GRAND POPS” watercolors on paper, Dennis Gray

Comes a street party and this smiling gal Neetu, witty, loved the City and soon this staple-gun cabinet maker, moved in together, Seton Hill, Windsor Hill, the Stein Mansion, married at Cross Keys, six years of night school, “seemed like forever,” certificate in computers, a B.S.in business, data manager for a mortgage company, a coat and tie kind of joint, bought a Pigtown house, gutted the place, put in walnut and cherry floors, new staircase, 13’ feet wide, directly behind B&O roundhouse, “like he’d never left the ‘hood.”

Now Alonsoville and working for an auto insurance company, Neetu “tired of his suit and tie and grumbling,” recommended art class up the street, Dennis trundled up Wingate with old brushes, old paper and paint, a Monday night, drinking red wine, eating dark chocolate, “people his age talking sex,” start of a relationship lasting to this day.

Came the right gig: teaching “learning-challenged kids,” dyslexia helped him relate, would paint at night, sometimes late, worked off photos, street scenes in the city, old neighborhoods, restaurant fronts, row houses, skipjacks, watermen, the foam of the boat, abstracts, but always the light, reflections of life. Walk into 4400 you will find your eyes drawn to the paintings on the walls, the sculptures on the shelves, and the exquisitely crafted coffee table. It’s a wonder the man had time to sleep.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Work is the curse of the drinking class.”
~W.C. Fields

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lacquead@gmail.com

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ALONSOVILLE POETS & ARTISTS

Lines like Fine Wine

SEVEN POEMS

By Donald Berger

Home

I come from hills
of sub shops.

If You Spin

If you spin around quickly and stop
the buildings think of toppling.

Tonight

Safe and Sound
is playing at Insomnia.

Team Reason

I see a bird, and try to guess
what it is. Does this happen to you?

Equation

There was a little hole
in the paneling, afraid to become a window.

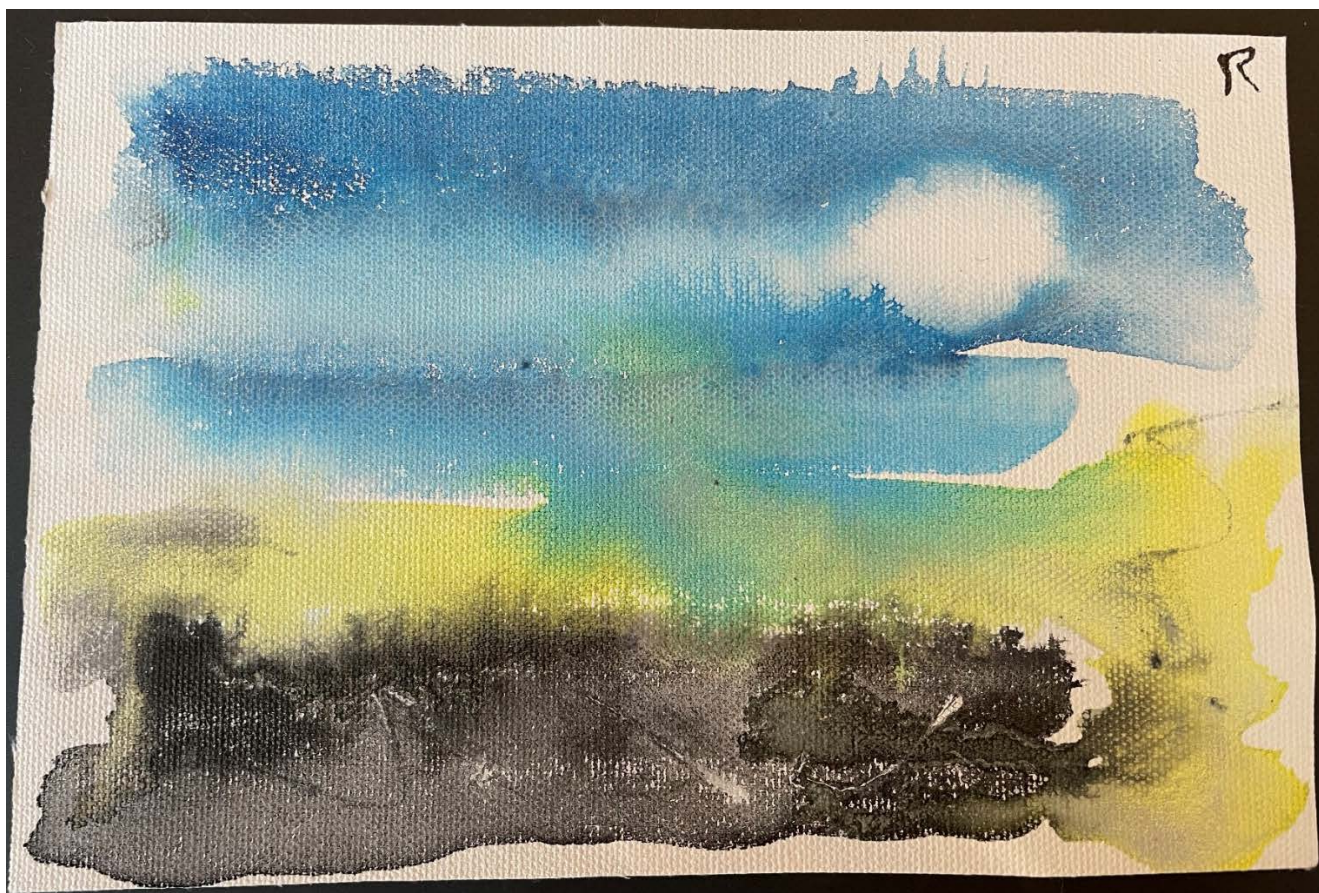
I Thought the Actor

I thought the actor
was talking to the kids but he was talking to me.

Earth

What is your favorite planet, Earth? So is mine.

ROSIE WYSE



Untitled, ink on canvas

CHRISTINE NEILL

I've lived on Wickford since the mid-70's and rebuilt my basement into a home studio. I also taught at MICA for over 4 decades.

I'm now a full time professional artist, represented by Goya Contemporary.

www.ChristineNeill.com



Moving

“Moving” reveals the loss felt when a child grows up and moves away.

~Mia Scharper

As urgently as the season arrives, it prepares to move away –
Sunlight sharpens behind the white oaks,
Wood toads with wide smiles that had lined the summer sidewalk
begin to burrow, humbled, into unforgiving mud,
Crickets surge desperately through the last of the heavy nights.

We had a daughter who was still a young girl last June.
We loved a girl who loved water,
who ran all day until her sneakers were stained green with the musk of fresh-cut grass,
who named the earthworms she pulled out from under the wet ivy,
who shouted in a wild language.

You grew up and moved to another coast,
you strange amphibian who took advantage of the passing seasons to wriggle away.
Whatever else our life was, and is,
it has to be this breath-taking loss, this falling away of time,
this sheltering, this longing, this love.

CAROL KURTZ-STACK



My watercolors are based on scenes that I find that interest me.

They can be of flowers and gardens or more gritty Baltimore imagery.

I enjoy the challenge of reinterpreting what I see in the photo into the watercolor on the paper.

“HARBOR” watercolors on paper



“ARTICHOKES” watercolors on paper

Katherine Kavanaugh

The bulk of my work for 30 years has been constructing impermanent, site specific installations. My intent with site specific work is to locate the “poetry” of the site and then to turn up the visual volume so others can experience it in a new way. In the outdoor work I respond to the givens, especially the invisible elements: the north-south, east-west axis, the arc of the sun, the light conditions, the wind patterns, human/animal traffic patterns and the topography and natural/man-made conditions. In addition, I do extensive research into the history of the area and of the former inhabitants of the land. The final choice of materials is dependent on what the site demands.

For more information: www.katherinekavanaugh.com



aria

“aria” was sited in the Camp Gallery of the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts in Amherst, VA. The gallery was originally a dairy barn built in the 1920's. “aria” was a response to:

- large luna moths which floated through the barn at night
- the air currents in the barn
- 4 silos surrounding the barn
- the neo-classical columns in southern Virginia homes

*240 columns of Japanese rayon paper
each column from 12ft. – 15ft.
barn 30ft. x 60ft. x 30ft.*



CANTO

“Canto” was sited in the three-story stairwell of the Museum of the Americas, Organization of American States in Washington, DC.

*Japanese rayon paper, steel cable, stairwell
55 ft. x 12 ft. x 10 ft.*



CLASS

“Class” was sited in the Evergreen House garden of Johns Hopkins University. The installation referenced the relationship between the owner of the Evergreen House, John Work Garrett, president of the B&O Railroad in 1878, and the immigrant railroad workers who lived in the various classes of houses near the rail yards in south Baltimore.



100 cast glass “rowhouses” on steel poles

Rowhouses - 3 sizes each representing different classes of workers’ houses.

Area of siting: 150 ft. x 40 ft.

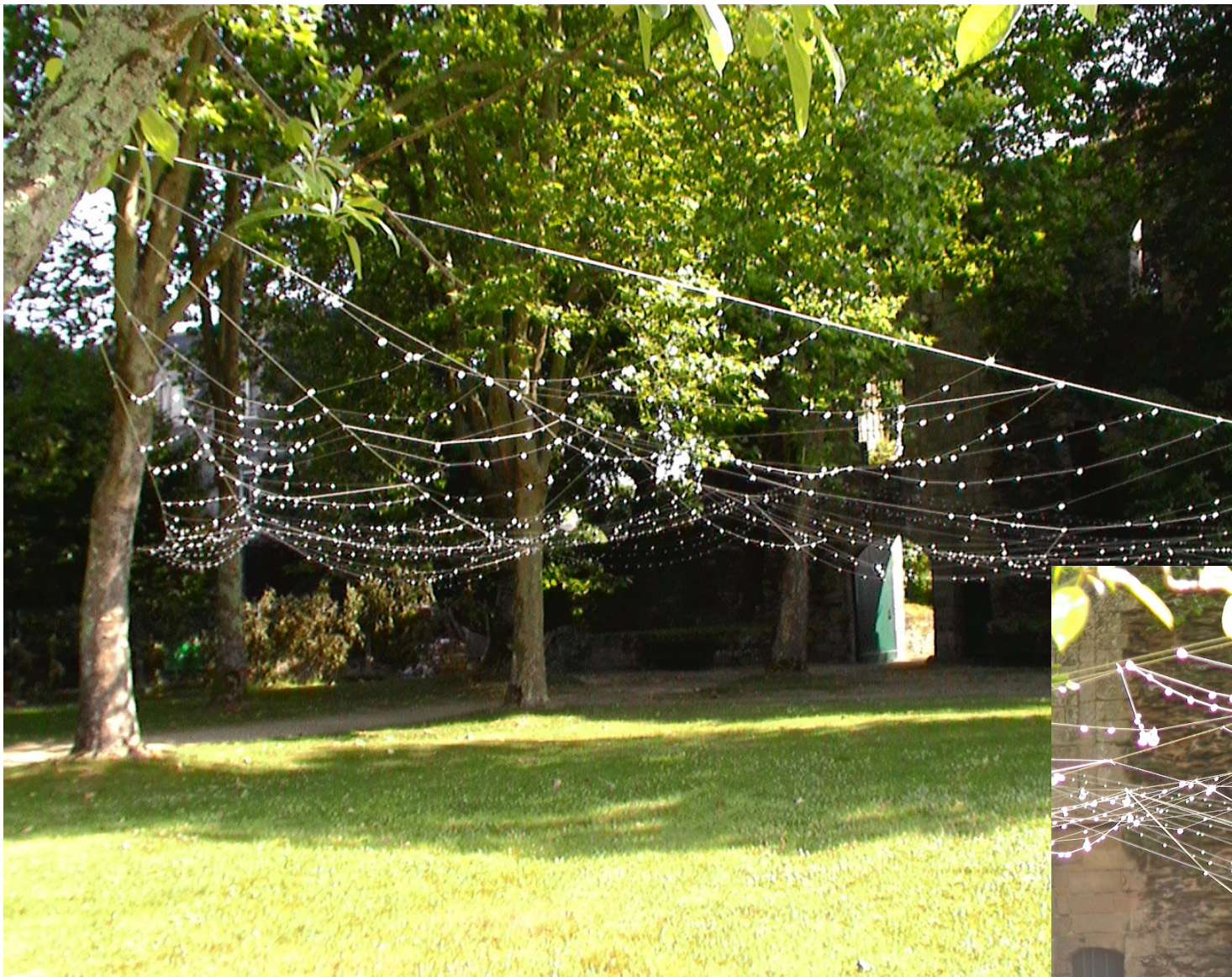
rowhouse heights from 8 ft. to 15 ft. tall



Rowhouses on tall poles like birdhouses gather across the east garden and perch on top of the hill. Imagine residents of the rowhouses, like birds crossing boundaries, flocking to the country garden at the Evergreen House for fresh air and a view.

WEB

“Web” was a site specific installation in a chateau courtyard in Brittany, France. It was inspired by the ground clover and the thousands of spider-webs found in the grasses. At night the multi-faceted, glass beads and monofilament related to constellation charts of Northern France.



*Steel cable, monofilament,
2500 faceted glass beads,
clover*

15 ft. (h) x 300 ft.(l) x 85 ft. (w)



RAVAGED

Ravaged is a series of 25 mono-prints from 2021 which were an emotional response to the unmitigated power of wildfires. What began as a series of prints to memorialize the destruction and after-effects of the charred forest-scape, soon turned into more potent imagery. As the fires continued to rage, I began to use actual fire and smoke in the work to show the chaotic frenzy of a world on fire both environmentally and politically.



Ravaged, monoprint by Katherine Kavanaugh

Mala Hierba

Times of madness call for humor, the sharper, the better.
~David Bolton

Begin morning coffee, Synthroid, aspirin and vitamin C, fish oil, garlic and a turmeric dash in the spinach smoothie. Only then can one absorb headlines landing in the dawn, like the Pink Floyd dirge, only the lunatic ain't in my head; it's spread across the printed page.

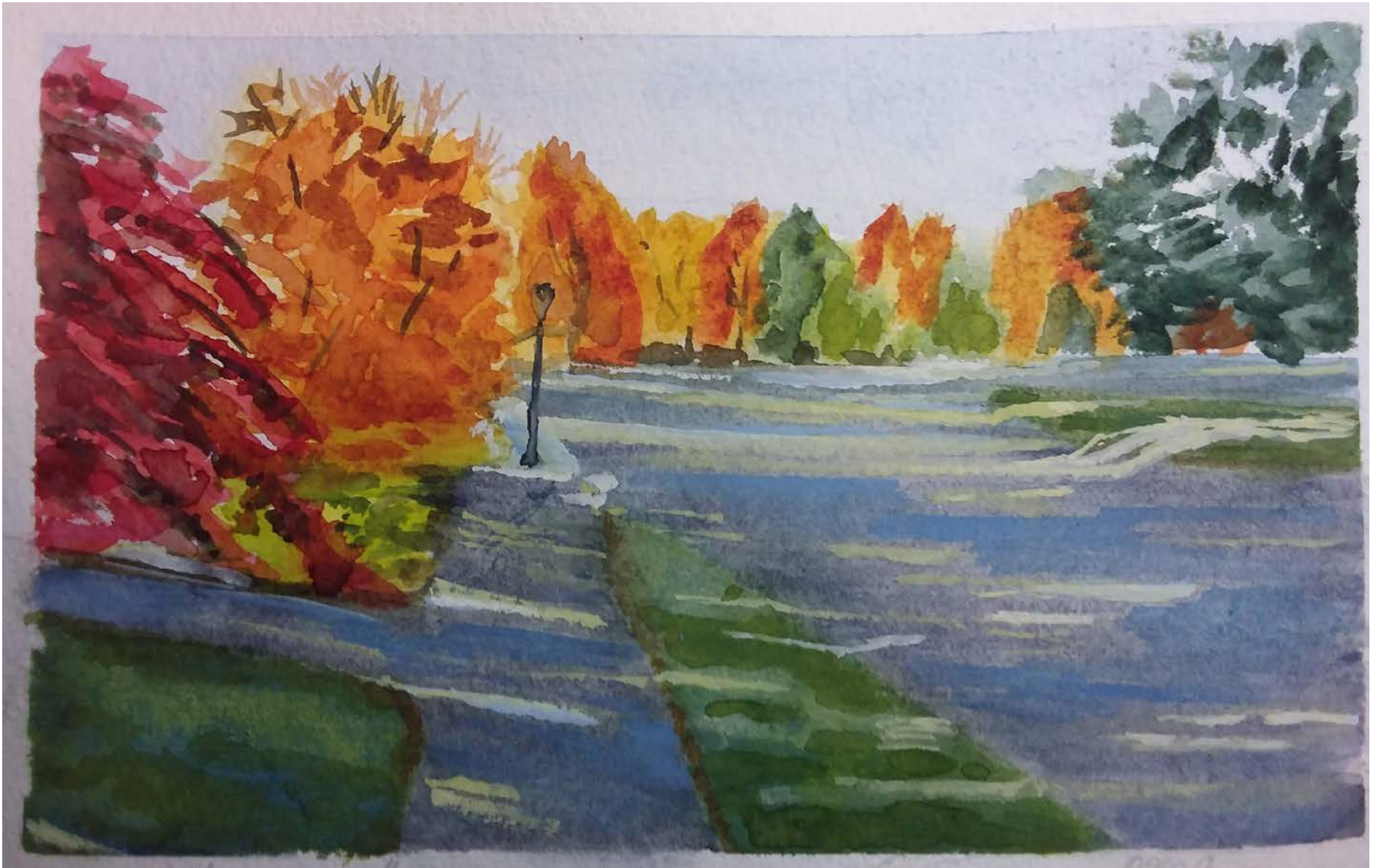
Another mass shooting, your thoughts and prayers please. Trump dis and Trump dat, like Lear, raging at the wind. Out vile jelly. Only the blind can see. Stay tuned on You Tube, next up "prison's gritty realities," brought to you by a host of maladies.

It's enough to make your teeth itch. Which means it's time to weed. This postage-stamp backyard, framed by a mossy stone wall and oak, holly, maple, and pine, softening the urban clamor, the distant highway rumble, planes from BWI, sirens and the chug of a night train.

Past the wall and trees, boys thump a soccer ball. Robins abound on the ground, pecking at worms, squirrels steal from the feeder, and a young rabbit munches clover. Bunny, keep those ears pricked. A bushy-tail fox could trot along the wall, or a horned owl could swoop from the branches. It's a jungle out here.

I fall to my knees, rooting out treacherous vines, incestuous chickpeas, wayward grasses and invasive species. Over the ivy-coated fence, Virginia creepers have launched a heart-felt assault, encroaching the yard in a single night, slithering over periwinkle and down the wall, ubiquitous for space, smothering trees and everything in between, a fascist plot destroying diversity. Clippers in hand, I scale the wall and slide past the fence with murderous intent. Among the brambles, thorns and poison ivy grow the roots of this madness. Here, I make my stand.

DENISE BOLTON



GREENWAY, watercolor on paper

Steps of Time

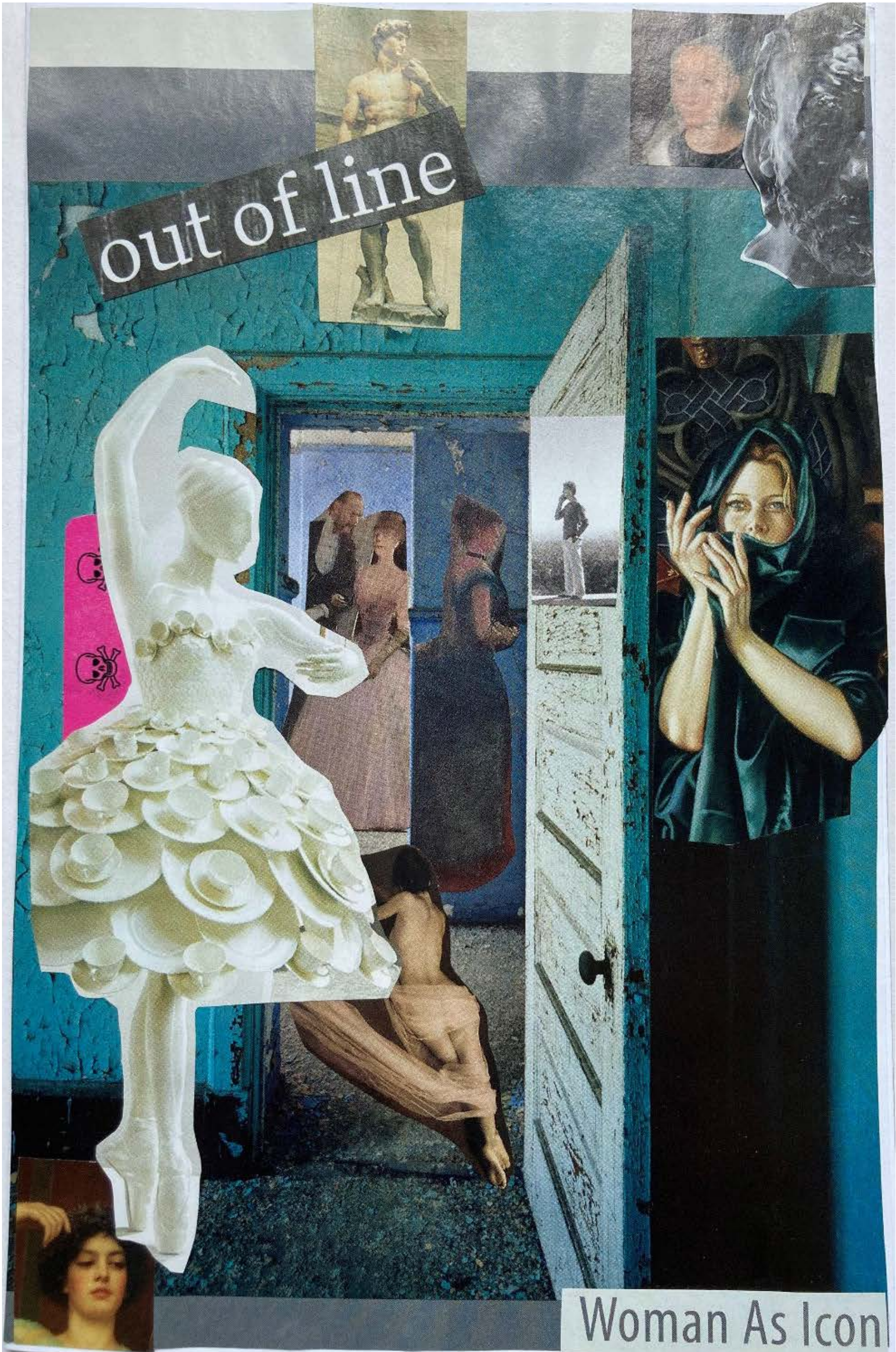
There's a lot to live for.
~David Bolton

I walk the steps of time
Prana leading the way
Slow, deep breathes
Up the stadium staircase
Feel the pounding of the heart
Fingers tingling with heat
At the top, hands on hips, a scan at the sky
Below: joggers, lacrosse players and wanderers
Time for the descent
Down and up, down and up, down and up...
The heart slows its beat, a rich stream
Flows through the cavity, in blue, out red
800 steps, one by one, up and down
Then an amble on home.

Girls skip by this old man
Perhaps sisters, 8 and 5.
Gliding over concrete
I once had daughters with coltish legs,
Skipping down the lane
Now the wheel turns, the cycle nearly complete
Not yet, Brother Death... sheath that scythe!
I am a warrior for the new generation
Granddaughters, 5 months apart
Just getting started
Don't have time to die
Gotta keep the machine in shape
Walking the steps of time.



EXPERIMENTING WITH ABSTRACT LANDSCAPE, watercolor, inks on paper



FREE ASSOCIATION, collage by Denise Bolton

Timothy App

My large abstract paintings focus on an intuitive play of pure forms derived from systematic divisions of space. Color applied in multiple thin layers attempts to create a drama of light that animates the forms. I work in several series simultaneously, allowing multiple works to fully express various compositional ideas.

During my fifty-year career, I have had many one-person and group exhibitions. My work is in numerous corporate and private collections, and is included in many museum collections, including the BMA. Five years ago, I retired from college teaching after forty-seven years.

“Alonzoville” is definitely the best neighborhood I’ve ever lived in!



March

“March,” which I wrote for my employer, Johns Hopkins Medicine, as we marked the first anniversary of our first COVID patient.

~Mia Scharper

Just as spring nudges against us once again,
And the sunlight rests on broken winter trees,
Not brittle but ready,
And we begin to yield to the hope of brighter days,
Ignoring just for a moment the sirens in the distance,
And the discarded masks shuffling along empty streets,
And even, once inside,
The stark hospital halls and the stubborn beeps.

We know it’s okay to take a moment,
To be silent, to remember.
It’s okay to know that we are resilient
Even as we stand, stunned, over the heartbreaking loss
And the breathtaking recovery.
This sliding away of an entire year,
This sliding into another year,
Alone and together, through windows and across halls,
Bodies hooded and gowned, faces covered and turned,
This, this is love in a pandemic.

The eyes that had to smile for us,
Because masks muted our mouths.
The screens that said goodbye, I love you, I’ll see you again.
The gloves that held our hands, not hands, but still --
Heavy with hope and comfort.

March said,
I’m ripping away the life you knew.
Entering like a lion and roaring through the rest of the year.
Somehow we held fast against furious winds,
Losing and gaining friends, patients, neighbors, colleagues.
Long months of data and doubt,
Stats and stubbornness, work and worry.
Yes -- and grief and relief and guilt and pride
Climbing through us like vines or veins.

And now, today, we remember, we were there.
We marched, we gave, we prayed, we loved
Through a year that lasted so long, it’s still here.

We’re still here, now commemorating an anniversary
We want to forget.
This March, we know it’s love that moves us.
The naked oaks will start to re-leaf,
The yellow crocuses to push through,
And, having rested for a moment,

Having reflected on the surreal,
We’ll stand and stretch,
With eyes open and hearts unmasked:
We’ll keep moving, forward, together, to heal.



Show & Tell, Sculpture by Dennis Gray

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY ALONSOVILLE!



NEWS & NOTES

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The City of Baltimore is seeking volunteers to work the 2022 election cycle at Baltimore City polling places. Volunteers will be paid by the Board of Elections \$200 - \$275 for working at a poll. General Election is Tuesday, November 8. election.judge@baltimorecity.gov



Photo by Winston's human, Patricia Gearhart

FEATURED DOG IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Winston *Alley Guard*

Boston Terrier
10 years old

If you've ever walked down Meadow Lane, perhaps you've seen our neighborhood watch?

We know! Your dog was meant to be famous! We received so many submissions of the most adorable dogs – like hundreds (or seven)! and we could only pick one for this issue.

But FRET NOT!

We are collecting all your photo submissions for the...drum roll please...the PETS ISSUE! Coming soon! Dave may even interview your pet for the feature story (Yes! He is fluent in Dog, but only conversant in Cat). So, keep those photos coming. We love oohing! and ahhhhing! at every single one of them!



ALONSOVILLE ANIMAL KINGDOM

Recent Bambi Sightings Right In Our Own Backyard.

Friday, June 17, 2022, 7:00 pm, as reported by Cyndy Serfas, two deer were frolicking on the other side of the stone wall on Wickford's alley.



Photos by Cyndy Serfas ;




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Block



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Deadline: August 1, 2022

Does your organization have an idea that will spruce up the neighborhood but you need a little funding to make it happen? If so, consider applying for Love Your Block microgrant, ranging from \$500- \$1500

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- Small Public Art Projects



For More Information:

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Email: BMOREBeautiful@baltimorecity.gov

FROM OUR EDITOR...

One More Word

The French philosopher and novelist, Albert Camus, once said that artists create “to give their lives order.” In Alonsoville, we are blessed with any number of talented painters, writers, sculptors, and photographers. And how ‘bout the musicians? I live next to a man who knows hundreds of songs. You name it and Tom can play it on his guitar. Then there’s John Dean, who whistles while walking his dog Louie. Versed in the American Songbook, John turns into Frank Sinatra every picnic. Fly me to the moon, indeed. In my garden, I hear Sara playing *Claire de Lune* on the piano.

During the pandemic, I needed to write just about every day. Out of that came a novel, *Love Is Where You Find It*, currently in quest of an agent, and a book of poetry, *A Mind Full of Nothing*, published by Bow Wow Press earlier this year. In addition, I wrote the equivalent of a memoir by answering weekly questions for *Storyworth*.

Sometimes, however, one can take this obsession of bit too far.

I Hunger for Words

I hunger for words, a story, message, and hymn to life
a requiem for death: The heart twitches
a shadowy finger snakes the artery
testing the mettle of this beat.
Be this the beginning of the end, what’s left to be said?
All the novels, short stories, essays, and poems
the piles of papers, notepads, typewriters, and computers...
the legacy has been set.

In my early 30s, wrote *McQueeq*, based on an Irishman.
met him on a ferry from Wales to Kinsale,
through foamy waves, I absorbed his flow of words
he leaned against the railing, a big man in worn pinstripes,
fiery red hair, speckles of gray, a lyrical voice and long, manicured fingers.

We sought out a harbor pub, The Drunken Duck
over Guinness and a Jameson he regaled me with tales of an art thief
As discussion verged from Greeks to Beats, he picked my pocket.
Tossing a bull’s eye, he returned the take, pressing the passport into my grasp.
“Careful, laddy,” he said with a wink.
Last call, we stumbled into the harbor night, coming to rest on the park grass.
It was a moonless evening stars clear and bright,
On his back, he revealed the constellations
I awoke to find the big man gone
vanished like a dream, my wallet still intact.

In a DC efficiency, I pounded the Underwood keys night and day
bringing the thief to life; for a year I wrote, lost in those words
I mailed the manuscript to my agent; she confirmed its mediocrity
a lack of chemistry, a flaccid plot, had to agree, but a part of me
could not leave those words. Decades passed, from house to house
I toted that cardboard box through marriages, children, and passages
couldn’t release *McQueeq*, always a chance for resurrection
this roll of yellowing pages, curled from moisture
all those words stuck together
In the fireplace, pages burn
flames worthy of its name.



A great big thank you to all of our writers, poets, drawers, painters, sculptors, photographers, artists who contributed their amazing work to this summer art issue of the Alonsoville Voice. You are truly what makes this neighborhood so special. Thank you for sharing your passion!