



THE FRALIN
MUSEUM OF ART

— AT THE —
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Writer's Eye 2022

Self-Guided Tour

Welcome to Writer's Eye 2022

We invite you to participate in *Writer's Eye 2022*, the 36th annual literary competition organized by The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia. Introduced by docents Carole Armstrong and Valerie Morris in 1986, this annual ekphrastic writing competition challenges writers of all ages to create original poetry and prose inspired by works of art. Over three decades, *Writer's Eye* has become the museum's flagship educational program, inspiring generations of writers as a mainstay of school curricula throughout central Virginia.

What is ekphrasis?

Both visual art and creative writing are forms of expression that give voice to the human experience, and poets have used visual art as inspiration for centuries. The word ekphrasis is a direct transcription from the Greek *ek*, "out of," and *phrasis*, meaning "speech" or "expression," and originally applied to verbal description of the visual aspects of a real or imagined object or work of art. Homer's description of Achilles' shield in Book 18 of the *Iliad* is the earliest recorded example of ekphrastic writing. Over time the concept of ekphrasis evolved from simple description of an artwork to any poetic expression or narrative inspired by a work of art. Published in 1820, John Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn* is one of the most famous examples of ekphrastic writing. More recently, poet Jan Greenberg has talked about her belief in "the power of art to inspire language," and author and educator Georgia Heard calls language "the poet's paint." Thus, ekphrastic writing is an ancient tradition that continues to inspire writers today!

About the competition

Compositions for *Writer's Eye 2022* can be submitted in the categories of Prose or Poetry, for grades 3–5, 6–8, 9–12, and University/Adult. Entries for grades 3-8 are judged anonymously by panels of local teachers and writing professionals. This year, our high school and adult entries will be judged by our inaugural Writer's Eye Fellows, Katherine James and Henrietta Hadley, current graduate students in the UVA Creative Writing MFA Program. Winners are honored in the spring, and first, second, and third-place winning entries are published in the annual *Writer's Eye* anthology. More information is available at: www.virginia.edu/artmuseum/edu.

About the selections

This year we have selected eight works from The Fralin's permanent collection, including four recent photography acquisitions and one object on loan. As The Fralin responds to the continued challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, tours will continue to be conducted virtually and in-person this year. We are pleased to continue to supply you with online resources to support your creative writing process.

**We hope this self-guided tour of this year's
Writer's Eye selections inspires you to make your own contribution
to the longstanding tradition of ekphrastic writing!**



Joseph Cornell

American, 1903–1972

Untitled (Juan Gris Series, Black Cockatoo Silhouette), ca. 1959–60

Box construction

19 5/8 x 12 x 4 3/8 in.

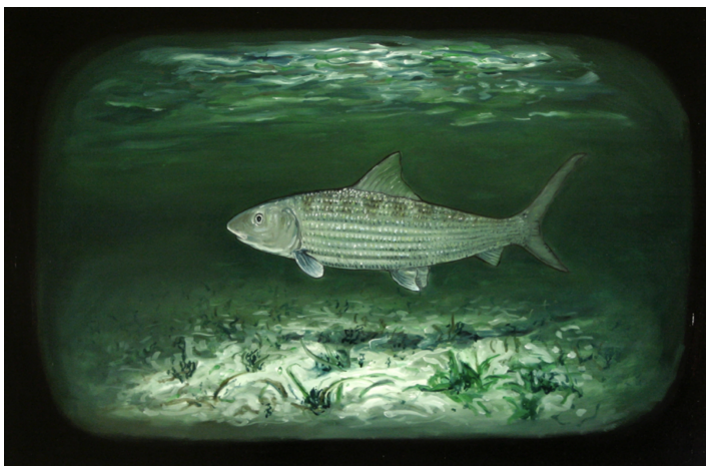
Gift of The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, 2002.15.3

Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

© The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

1. New York artist **Joseph Cornell** (1903–1972) was influenced by and had a significant impact on the rich artistic culture of mid-century New York City. He created his boxes, a signature element of his practice, at the kitchen table in his home in Queens. He would often give these “shadow” boxes to neighborhood children, who he thought had the easiest understanding of them. The playful, dream-like boxes encapsulated Cornell’s poetic sensibility, featuring cuttings and photographs from his vast collection. Inside this box, we find a paper silhouette of a cockatoo, a pink plastic ring toy, the words “grand” and “hotel” collaged onto a French newspaper. The upper portion of the box is sealed off by glass. On the back, there is an image of a white cockatoo aligned with the silhouette on the inside of the box.

- What do you make of Cornell’s use of a bird on both the inside and outside of the box? What feelings or emotions do you associate with birds? What about the idea of a birdcage? How might you be inspired by the box to begin to write a poem or tell a story?



Alberto Rey

American, born Cuba in 1960

Biological Regionalism: Bonefish, Jardines de la Reina, Cuba, 2006

Oil on plaster

33 x 42 in.

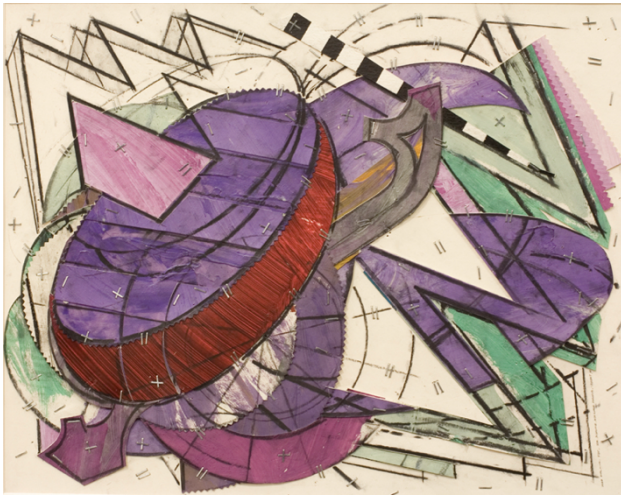
Gift of the Artist, 2008.9.2

Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

© Alberto Rey

2. **Alberto Rey** (b. 1960) is an artist who carefully considers nature’s role in our culture. In this painting, Rey takes us underwater in the vibrant ecosystem of *Jardines de la Reina* off the southern coast of Cuba where we encounter a bonefish, a beady-eyed fish native to Cuba. Rey’s choice of style and content speaks to his identity as an avid fly-fisherman and a Cuban-American. By placing viewers within the fish’s habitat, Rey hopes to make us aware of society’s growing disconnection from the natural world. This intimate portrayal of a single fish intensifies our connection to nature and makes us aware of wildlife we might not otherwise encounter.

- Consider your point of view. What do you notice about the framing of this image? What’s your sensory experience of looking at this fish?
- What do you notice about the use of light in this painting?



Robert Reed

American, 1938–2014

Tree for Mine, 1990

Collage, paint, charcoal and staples on paper
15 5/8 x 19 5/8 in.

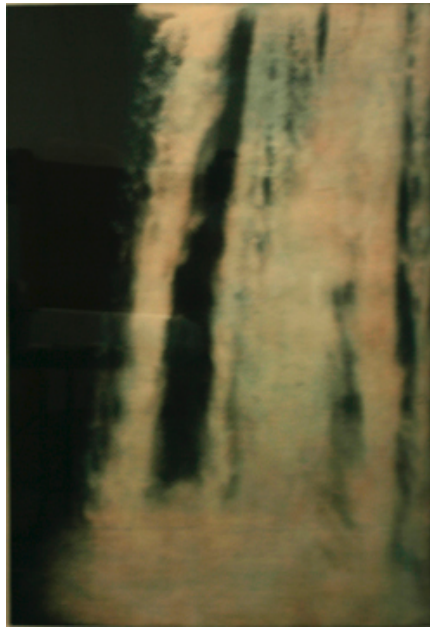
Bequest of Suzanne Foley, 2007.7.34

Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

© Robert Reed Estate

3. Abstract Expressionist and Charlottesville native, **Robert Reed** (1938-2014) attended Yale School of Art where he taught for over 45 years. Autobiographical in nature, his art often includes geometric abstractions and recurring motifs inspired by his childhood memories in Virginia. Some of his “paper constructions,” like this one, feature shapes and colors derived from his memories of First Baptist Church on Main Street in Charlottesville. The titles of many of his works are as playful and site-specific as his art. This collage in particular, *Tree for Mine*, can be understood as a reference to Reed’s childhood address, 349 10 ½ Street NW. Notice the slant rhyme of “tree for mine” and “three four nine.”

- Look carefully at this paper construction. Follow the lines. Where do they lead? What do they form? What does the image remind you of?
- Reflect on Reed’s artistic technique. How might you be inspired by Reed to incorporate memories and wordplay into your writing?



Eeva-Liisa Isomaa

Finnish, b. 1956

The Birth of the Universe, 1997

Color polymer photogravure on paper
58 1/4 x 40 1/4 in.

Museum purchase with the Curriculum Support Fund, 1997.31.1.1

Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

© Eeva-Liisa Isomaa/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

4. **Eeva-Liisa Isomaa** (b. 1956) is a contemporary Finnish printmaker and graphic artist. She creates self-reflective art that investigates both the interpretation and remembrance of nature and passage of time. As explained by the artist, she intends to “mix timelines” and “create an imaginary space” through her art. *The Birth of the Universe* presents an abstracted image of a waterfall. From a closer view, the seemingly white and blue image is actually comprised of several layers of color. The artist leaves this work purposefully ambiguous as she is, “interested in the memories the landscape awakes” and what experiences or memories are conjured up by viewers when attempting to interpret her art.

- What colors do you see? What feelings do they evoke?
- The image is intentionally ambiguous, though many see a waterfall. What are other possible interpretations?
- Be inspired by Isomaa’s artistic practice. How might you “mix timelines” or “create imaginary space” in your own writing?



***Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja* (a thangka from an arhat set)**

Tibet, 18th century

Distemper on cloth, silk mounting

33 1/4 x 24 5/8 in.; with silks: 60 x 31 1/2 in.

Private collection

6. This thangka from Tibet shows the life story of Buddhist teacher ***Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja***, seen sitting on the right in a Chinese-style throne. He holds an alms bowl and books in his hands. His story begins at the bottom right, where we can see his early life in a palace. The biographical episodes continue clockwise, each vignette identified with a golden inscription. They include his study with the Buddha in a forest (bottom left); his discourse (top left); and his residence with other arhats (Buddhist teachers) to safeguard the Buddhist Law (top right). The Chinese-inspired blue and green landscape contains bright and pastel colors. The style of the figures is inspired by precisely detailed Indian miniature paintings. The wide-open landscape directs the narrative and draws the viewer into each vignette.

- In this painting, there are several different moments happening at the same time. If you were transported inside this work, which moment would you gravitate towards? Why?



Sarah Maple

British, b. 1985

Snow White the Scientist, 2011

Chromogenic print

33.5 x 21.6 in.

Museum purchase through the Bayly Art Museum Acquisition Fund, 2022.6.2

Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

© Sarah Maple

7. **Sarah Maple** (b. 1985) is a contemporary British artist, primarily working in painting and photography. Through her art, Maple confronts stereotypes and investigates themes of feminism, politics, pop-culture, and identity through satirical and often provocative content. In the *Disney Princess* series, Maple reimagines the familiar fairytales by casting herself as a princess at work: Sleeping Beauty as a surgeon, Belle as a soccer coach, Ariel as a CEO. In this photograph, Maple is dressed as Snow White, accessorized in lab safety gear.

- What details do you notice in the photograph?
- How might you describe the central figure?
- Investigate your first response to the photograph. What do you make of a princess in a science laboratory? How might you reimagine Snow White's story?



Tokie Rome-Taylor

American, b. 1977

Ancestors Speak...Soft as Cotton, 2020

Inkjet print

36 x 24 in.

Museum purchase through the Bayly Art Museum Acquisition Fund, 2022.6.2

Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

© Tokie Rome-Taylor

7. Atlanta-based photographer **Tokie Rome-Taylor** (b. 1977) creates lavish portraits filled with fabrics, shells, mirrors, lace, and gold. Rome-Taylor uses objects that signal wealth with material culture from the African diaspora. Rome-Taylor researches and investigates the symbolic meaning of the objects in her photographs, some of which are the artist's or the sitter's family heirlooms. Her photographs bring up themes of identity and representation, especially in relation to young people of color. The children in her photographs exude ancestral knowledge, wisdom, power, and beauty, representing the interwoven connections between past, present, and future.

- Look carefully. What element of the image stands out the most to you?
- If you could talk to this child, what might you ask her?
- If you were to create your own artwork depicting your identity, what objects would you use to tell your story?



Wendy Red Star

Apsáalooke, b. 1981

Apsáalooke Feminist #4, 2016

Inkjet print

35 x 42 in.

Museum purchase, 2020.6

Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

© Wendy Red Star

8. **Wendy Red Star** (b. 1981) is a multimedia artist based in Portland, Oregon. She was raised in Billings, Montana and on the Apsáalooke (Crow) Reservation. Her work explores cultural identity, Crow mythology, the significance of family, and the Indigenous origins of feminism. In *Apsáalooke Feminist #4*, Red Star is seated with her daughter, Beatrice, with whom she collaborated on the staging and design. Both wear traditional Crow regalia; elk tooth dresses patterned in red and dark blue with striped sleeve cuffs and elk teeth sewn onto the fabric. Red Star brings to her work her own cultural perspective as a Native American woman, as well as historical context gleaned from her research. She believes, "It is critical to preserve and pass along culture, heritage, and shared values while also providing future generations with a sense of identity, solidarity, and empowerment."

- Closely observe the photograph. What details do you notice in image? What do you notice about the artist Wendy Red Star and her daughter Beatrice? What do you notice about the background?
- Think about the people close to you. How might you work together to create a story or a poem that communicates an idea about your identity?



Cara Romero

Chemehuevi, b. 1977

Naomi, 2017

Inket print

49 x 40 in.

Museum purchase through the Bayly Art Museum Acquisition Fund,
2022.4.2

Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia

© Cara Romero

9. **Cara Romero (b. 1977)** was born in Inglewood, California and is an enrolled citizen of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, native to areas between southern California and Arizona. *Naomi* is part of the artist's First American Girl series and depicts a woman of the Northern Chumash culture garbed in traditional clothes and jewelry made from natural material. Standing in front a wall of items significant to the Chumash people, Naomi wears a traditional basket hat and holds up two Chumash feathered dance sticks. The hot pink in combination with black and white details in this enclosed space—reminiscent of a packaged doll's box—reflect modern California, while the triangular pattern abstracts a pinecone motif significant in traditional Chumash beadwork. In this series, the artist reclaims the imagery of Native women and celebrates tradition in a time of modernity.

- Does this depiction of Native American culture and life differ from other depictions you are familiar with?
- How might the objects that surround Naomi help to tell her story?

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Joseph Cornell, “Untitled (Juan Gris Series, Black Cockatoo Silhouette)”

- Juan Gris (hwan gree)

Alberto Rey, “Biological Regionalism: Bonfish, Jardines de la Reina”

- Jardines (har-dee·nes)
- Reina (ray·na)

Eeva-Liisa Isomaa, “The Birth of the Universe”

- Eeva-Liisa Isomaa (Ee·va Lee·sa Ee·sow·ma)

“Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja”

- Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja (Pin·dow·la Bar·add·rah·ja)

Wendy Red Star, “Apsáalooke Feminist #4”

- Apsáalooke (Ap-sah-lo-kuh)

Cara Romero, “*Naomi*”

- Cara Romero (Care·uh Roe·mare·oh)
- Chemehuevi (Cheh·meh·way·vee)
- Chumash (shoe·mash)