

WRITER'S EYE 2024



Self-Guided Tour

Welcome to *Writer's Eye* 2024

We invite you to participate in *Writer's Eye* 2024, the 38th 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 *Illiad* 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 Selections

This year, we have selected eight works from The Fralin's permanent collection and two photographs on loan. As The Fralin responds to the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, tours will continue to be conducted virtually and in-person this year. Participants can also engage asynchronously through online resources including our Spotlight Talk videos on YouTube.

Teacher Fellows

This year, we are pleased to announce our inaugural *Writer's Eye* Teacher Fellows. This fellowship program, open to teachers in Charlottesville City and Albemarle County Public Schools, provides teachers with the resources and support they need to practice and advocate for arts integration in their schools. This year's Teacher Fellows are Bridget Drain-Watters (Buford Middle School), Ryan Trott (Burnley-Moran Elementary), Faith Vandever (Walker Upper Elementary School), and Cianna Washburg (Buford Middle School).

About the Competition

Compositions for *Writer's Eye* 2024 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 artists and educators. This year, our high school and adult entries will be judged by *Writer's Eye* Fellows, Kaitlyn Airy and MaKshya Tolbert. Winners are honored in the spring, and five winning entries from each category will be published in the annual *Writer's Eye* anthology. To learn more about the competition, please visit our website at: <https://uvafralinartmuseum.virginia.edu/program/writers-eye>

Winner Selections

5 winning entries will be selected in each category to be printed in the anthology, and winners will each be awarded a prize of \$100.

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!



Leonardo Nierman, Mexican, 1932-2023
Meditation, 1978
 Acrylic on Masonite, 55 x 42 1/4 in. (139.7 x 107.3 cm)
 Collection of The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia
 Given in Memory of Dr. Jesse W. Beams, 1898-1977, Francis H. Smith Professor of Physics, 1978.18
 © Leonardo Nierman

Armando Mariño's work often addresses issues of race and tensions between western and non-western societies by re-contextualizing famous works of art with subtle and ironic critique. Here, he creates an interior scene with a framed painting reflecting on the polished surface of the floor. The Indigenous figure atop the painting wears Taino regalia, while the man inside the frame wears 19th century European clothes. The intense red background interrupts the contemplative serenity of the majestic, foggy landscape, mirroring two narratives taking place. The confrontational gaze of the Indigenous figure overrides the perspective of the historical European painting, as if demanding to be engaged with in the present moment.

- One man faces away from the viewer, and one man faces the viewer. How would it be different if the men turned around, and the roles were reversed?
- Imagine you could have a conversation with the Indigenous figure. What questions would you ask him about his story? What would you want to learn?

Leonardo Nierman (1932-2023) trained as a violinist for much of his early life before graduating from college with a degree in physics and mathematics. As an artist, Nierman sought to unite his love of music and his fascination with the natural sciences. He achieved this by studying the relationship between abstract art and cosmic phenomena, allowing his studies to influence his own visual language. *Meditation* explores Nierman's interest in the "creative violence" of nature. His gestural brushstrokes create sharp highlights and shadows, providing the illusion of movement within the painting. Nierman united his passion for physics, mathematics, and classical music through visual art.

- Think of where you encounter the arts and sciences in your daily life. Do they overlap?
- How does this painting connect the world as seen by an artist with the world as seen by a scientist?
- What are some of your passions? How might you connect them to each other?



Armando Mariño, Cuban, b. 1968
De frente al público-Hombre de espalda y hombre de frente (In front of the public-Man from the back and man from the front), 2003
 Oil on canvas, 70 x 53 in. (177.8 x 134.6 cm)
 Collection of The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia
 Museum purchase with support from the FUNd, 2003.20
 © Armando Mariño



Wadsworth Jarrell, American, b. 1929
Jazz Giants, 1987
 Lithograph on paper,
 30 x 22 in. (76.2 x 55.9 cm)
 Collection of The Fralin Museum of Art at the
 University of Virginia
 Bequest of D. Lurton Masee, Jr., 1994.1.13
 © Wadsworth Jarrell

Gullah (or Gullah Geechee) describes both a language and a culture rooted in the coastal lowlands of South Carolina and Georgia. **Jonathan Green** was born in 1955 in Gardens Corner, South Carolina, and raised in the Gullah tradition - centering spirituality, strong community bonds, and connection to the land. His paintings celebrate the beauty of the region and the people and places that shaped his childhood. Green's vibrant use of color evokes the richness of Gullah life. While *Zebra Farm Bus* captures the everyday movement of farm workers heading home as the sun begins to set, *Venus* creates an atmosphere of solitary contemplation. Green's paintings strike viewers with the beauty of the landscape - the setting sun, the tall grass, the movement of the water - honoring the landscape as a sacred space at the heart of a resilient community.

Wadsworth Jarrell (b. 1929) is an African American artist who was active in Chicago during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Jarrell was one of the founding members of **AFRICOBRA (African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists)**, a group of artists that strived to agree on a relevant aesthetic of Black art that could shift the Civil Rights struggle to an international scale. Jarrell often created tributes to prominent Black figures that showed the richness of African American culture, such as his surreal depiction of Jazz legends Dizzy Gillespie, Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, and Cootie Williams performing in a circular ensemble against a textured background. *Jazz Giants* is a vibrant celebration with a willingness to improvise fitting for a work inspired by Jazz music.

- How can art be used to protest? Can a tribute to someone also be protest art?
- What sounds would this painting make?
- This painting incorporates abstract and figural elements. Would you say this painting is realism or abstraction? How can something be a mix of both?



Jonathan Green, American, b. 1955
Zebra Farm Bus, 1997
 Oil on canvas, 12 x 16 in. (30.5 x 40.6 cm)
 Collection of The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia
 Gift of Ellen A. Hennessy, 2010.14.10
 © Jonathan Green



Jonathan Green, American, b. 1955
Venus, 1997
 Oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm)
 Collection of The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia.
 Gift of Ellen A. Hennessy, 2010.14.11
 © Jonathan Green

- Think of a place that is important to you - what makes it special? What are the sounds, images, and memories that come up when you imagine that place?
- How might these two paintings be different if we could see the subject's faces?



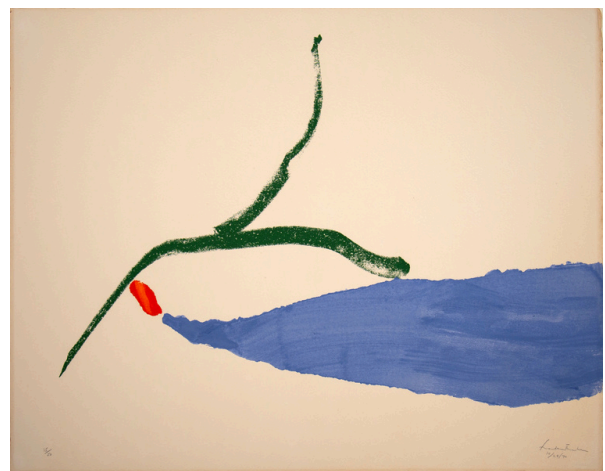
Rufino Tamayo, Mexican, 1899-1991
 Editions Press, San Francisco
Chacal [Jackal], from the series **Mexican Masters Suite**, 1973
 Color lithograph on Arches paper, 43/100
 22 1/2 x 30 in (57.2 x 76.2 cm)
 Collection of The Fralin Museum of Art at the
 University of Virginia
 Gift of the family of Deborah S. Cohn
 in memory of Murray Schaffer, 2024.4
 © Rufino Tamayo / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011) was an American abstract artist who is known for creating a soak stain technique in painting. This process allowed Frankenthaler to apply thinned out pigments directly onto an unprimed canvas lying on the floor, resulting in large fields of color indistinguishable from the canvas itself. Frankenthaler's prints reflect the thinly-washed, spontaneous, and free brushstrokes that she had first employed in painting and later transferred to a medium of printmaking known as pochoir, or layered stenciling. *A Little Zen* recalls the work of Zen Buddhist masters such as **Hakuin Ekaku** (1686-1769) and his work, *Two Blind Men Crossing a Bridge*. By 1970, when this work was created, Frankenthaler was crafting prints that were more in keeping with her former art teacher, **Rufino Tamayo**.

- Why might Frankenthaler have chosen these colors for her forms? How might this print be different had she used different colors?
- Why might the artist have decided not to have her forms touch? Where would you have placed these forms?

Rufino Tamayo reexamined dog imagery over the course of his decades-long career as a painter, and by the 1970s, he made the leap to printmaking. However, while he had previously used dark, earth-tones in his paintings, in this print, he transitions to bright yellow-orange, green, and red—colors that diverge from what the viewer would expect in the natural world. Here, we only see the dog's bared teeth and green, abstracted head encircled by a threatening spiked collar, a reference to human control, suggesting the animal is a guard dog. References to coyotes, wild dogs, and Xoloitzcuintli (a hairless breed) are pervasive in indigenous folklore in Mexico and stretch back to their appearance in Pre-Columbian ceramic vessels of Colima. Originally from a Zapotec community in Oaxaca, Tamayo's art shows a visual conversation between his cultural heritage and Modernist painting.

- Dogs are an important artistic image in Tamayo's culture. What animals are important in your culture?
- Look closely at the eyes. What do they tell you about the Jackal, and how do they make you feel?
- Why might Tamayo have chosen to make the Jackal green?



Helen Frankenthaler, American, 1928-2011
A Little Zen, 1970
 Acrylic pochoir and screenprint on paper,
 23 x 32 in (58.4 x 81.3 cm)
 Collection of The Fralin Museum of Art at the
 University of Virginia
 Gift of Janice and Henry Perskin, 2022.13.6
 © 2024 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / Artists Rights
 Society (ARS), New York / Abrams Original Editions, New York



Miguel Covarrubias, Mexican, 1904-1957.
Fever Bark Tree, circa 1946
 Gouache on paper, 16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm).
 Collection of The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia.
 Gift of Frederick and Lucy S. Herman Foundation, 2018.5.31.
 © Miguel Covarrubias

Miguel Covarrubias (1904-1957) was an artist, historian, and ethnologist. Throughout his life, Covarrubias traveled extensively, documenting his travels and research through his cartoons and caricatures, in addition to creating illustrations for other authors.

Covarrubias layered gouache, an opaque water-based paint, to build the scenery of *Fever Bark Tree* with intricate brushstrokes. In the center of the painting, a pair of hands slices a piece of bark off a tree.

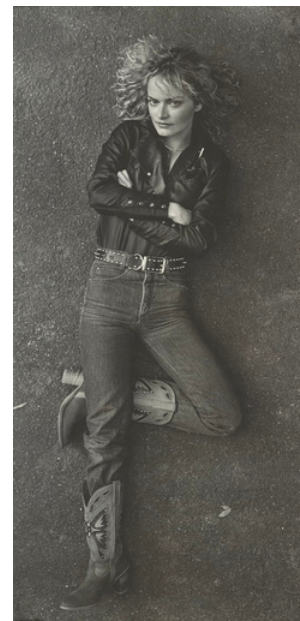
Fever Bark Tree was originally used as the cover art for a book called *The Fever Bark Tree: The Pageant of Quinine* by M.L. Duran-Reynals. The bark of the Peruvian Fever Tree, seen mid-harvest in this work, contains the chemical quinine, which has been used historically to combat malaria. Duran-Reynals' book documents the history of quinine and the progress of its public use.

- Imagine you were standing in this scene. What would you smell, hear, and feel around you?
- What kinds of lines and brushstrokes do you see?

Holly Wright (b.1941) is an American photographer who got her start as an actress in the 60s before transitioning to the other side of the camera. Her work often relies on forced encounters between the viewer and subject, conjuring photographs that are introspective and vulnerable. Inspired by the tradition of wealthy people commissioning portraits of themselves to be sculpted and included at their grave or final resting place, Wright asked the subjects of *Final Portraits* (1980-1983) to adopt a pose and expression that conveys how they would like to meet death. The result of this is a theatrical series shaped by the choices of clothes, hair, and poses, all of which lend us an intimate view into how the subjects view death. *Final Portrait: Holly and Charles* captures the photographer laying in bed next to her husband, Charles, whereas *Final Portrait: Peggy* shows a friend of Holly's lying in the street with her arms crossed confidently. The calm, domestic quality of *Final Portrait: Holly and Charles* starkly contrasts the rebellious, edgy quality of *Final Portrait: Peggy*.

- What do the different photos tell us about how the individual subjects feel about death?
- What do you notice about how they've chosen to pose? What do you notice about their outfits?
- How would you present yourself if she asked to photograph you in this series?

Holly Wright
 American, b. 1941
Final Portrait: Peggy, 1981
 Gelatin silver print on canvas
 75 x 34 1/2 in.
 (190.5 x 87.6 cm)
 On loan to The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia from the artist, IL.2024.5.1.
 © Holly Wright



Holly Wright
 American, b. 1941
Final Portrait: Charles and Holly Wright, 1981
 Gelatin silver print on canvas, 75 1/2 x 47 1/2 in.
 (191.8 x 120.7 cm)
 On loan to The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia from the artist, IL.2024.5.4.
 © Holly Wright

