

VOLUME 2/3

POEMS
FROM THE SECOND ANNUAL
ARTISTS THRIVE SUMMIT

JULY 31-AUGUST 3, 2018
BEREA, KENTUCKY

GEORGE
ELLA
LYON

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Why Artists Matter

--found in *Lewis Hyde's The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World*

The work of art
is a copula: a bond . . .
a link by which the several
are knit into one.
Men and women who dedicate
their lives to the realization
of their gifts tend the office
of that communion
by which we are joined
to one another

Notions That Don't Help

If you're living right, you'll never have enough money.
If you're an artist, you'll never have enough money.
Therefore, if you're an artist, you're living right.

*

A precarious life is ennobling,
inspiring, perhaps necessary
to create
a true artist.

*

Artists don't need much.

*

What's health care when you've got art?

*

Artists have it easy.
They just play around
till something comes alive.



As an artist, I am central
to society
culture
and myself.
I walk in the room
and I am the power.

*

Start with art that has heart.



It's the Jobs

the jobs that eat up my writing life.

Getting ready for them, getting to them,
doing them coming home from them getting
over them. And if I don't have jobs, it's not having any jobs,
no jobs, that eat up my writing. It's money worries.

It's you-can't-live-an-income-free-life. It's I wrote
a thousand words and what did I get? Another
day older and deeper in debt. You bet.

So you see either way you go

it's chomp chomp chomp

on the pages that might

be written, the songs

that might be sung,

but hey! I'm writing

this, so how bad

can it be? Don't

ask.

Envisioning

wood & lathe
dream & ladder
thread & loom
ink

paper
paintbox
sable brushes

steel strings

breath stretching the intercostals
broadening the back body

beads seeding rainbow

a breastplate of porcupine quills

outgrown clothes, cut & pieced
then quilted
ten stitches to an inch

the sauce brought to its velvet flavor

parquetry

the e worn off the keyboard

the eye behind the lens
the heart behind the eye

the dancer

lifting off

Art Is

a dance

alone
within
earth

together
without
sky

many ways

we

breathe

Artists Thrive

when forests flourish
in meadow wealth
artists thrive

Artists thrive

where health is nurtured
where dreams are gardens

Artists thrive

Artists thrive

when seen as workers
when someone wants
what we can make

when wealth is not
the gauge of worth

Artists thrive.

What Kind of Power Are We Talking About?

(question raised at ATS II)

The joy of making
of living each day
on the side of life

with community
to see us through
when our bridges are swept away

in a tide of self-doubt
when the way to the well
has grown thick with thorns

when the rent is due
and the job is next week
and the check won't come

till the board meets
which is once a month
though its members eat every day

We're talking about the power
to do our work
and have our supper

the power of the brush
plump with paint
of the singer

muscling her breath,
her songs
the power of the listeners

to be opened
and changed. We're
talking about what a dancer

does with gravity
what a sculptor reveals
about space. We mean

(...)



images dilating
the dark with visions.
We're talking trans-

formation

quickening

something

from nothing

speech

out of silence

a hand

that reaches

not for a weapon

but for another

hand.





To Be Clear

They don't want
a side hustle.
They don't want
to moonlight anymore.
They want
to pay
for everything
with their art.

Three Voices from ATII

--a found poem

I am a fire artist.

Who's going to tell me what I can and cannot do?

My instrument is the hula hoop.

Don't wait to be asked to the table.

I set it on fire

Make your own table.

and then I dance with it.

Food for Thought

Just when the cold room, the abstract talk
was about to congeal my spirit and somnify my mind
caterers brought in boxes of warm hand pies—
caramel apple, chocolate, mixed berry—
just like my granny never made
and we all came alive!

Question for Pegasus

Do you get it that we have to eat? That we can't eat poems?
Do you care about the buckling deck rail, the gap between
garage roof and wall? Do you see them when you fly over
and I'm not here to beckon you down? Do you understand
poems won't fix this?

Listen to me,
you mythic piece
of flying horseflesh!
I gave you my heart
long ago. I still give.

But then I was free from fear and had energy like a fountain.
Now I'm as fragile as the world. My spine, like my house,
is shifting. I can't work as long in harness.

You turn your great head away,
tossing your mane. The cares
of this world are not yours
paved pastures of debt and death.

But come on, Pegasus, do it for me.
Quit your cloudy stall and win us a race!

BIOGRAPHY

George Ella Lyon, Kentucky Poet Laureate (2015-2016), has published in many genres, including picture books, poetry, novels, short stories, and a memoir. Her poem “Where I’m From” has gone around the world as a writing model. Her most recent collections include *She Let Herself Go* (LSU, 2012) and *Many-Storyed House* (Univ. Press of Ky, 2013). She makes her living as a freelance writer and teacher based in Lexington. For more information, visit www.georgeellalyon.com.

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