

**Words on Canvas**  
Writing Competition

**2015**  
Winning Entries



Art is a highly personal experience. It is also a collective one. The meaning of a painting, sculpture or photograph remains incomplete until it has been viewed, discussed or written about. By sharing what we see when we look, we learn more about art and about ourselves. Words on Canvas exists to facilitate this shared understanding. For the writer, it is a chance to look beyond the surface of a piece. For you, the reader, it is a chance to share another's perspective for a moment. We hope you enjoy this year's winning Words on Canvas entries. Feel free to take this booklet with you into the Harn's galleries and see what stories emerge and inspire you during your visit.

Competition Judges:

Dr. Stephanie Smith, UF English Department

Dr. Sidney Wade, UF English Department

Dr. Jack Stenner, UF Art + Art History Department

Thanks to our judges and to all who submitted their work.

Booklet designed by Colin Bailey Williams.

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**This booklet for educational use only.**

Leora Lieberman – English, Pre-Med, and Public Health at UF  
*honorable mention*

### **Forest with Heron**

A drip of dawn's dew slips  
down a slack-stemmed frond,  
slides smooth like the touch  
of hand tips down the trunk  
of a bare spine-d back

and then,  
the palm lets go

the clear sphere falls passed  
the sun smeared light wet  
with the start of day, falls  
slight on the ridged skin  
of gray bark, falls to meld

in tight hold, small  
in a pond of one.

#### **Inspired by**

*Forest with Heron*

Herman Herzog

2014.28.1

Gift of Friends of the Harn Museum

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Gizelle Fletcher – Poetry, MFA at UF

*third place*

### Through the Windows

The sky, blue and gray, stretches like a worn tarp over the full-mast buildings, pride-straightened, sighing smoke from their shadowy sides. We cannot see them— the faces behind the building's lists of light, the sharp yellows cutting the cottony fog— but we imagine the kisses awarded like medals to a returning father's face, the radios fighting static to announce yesterday's victory, Lady Day's jazzy breaths spent through a mesh of speakers.

The meter of marching feet that ousted flames abroad keeps time with a daughter's waltz— the daughter who only knows the world through her golden window, to whom smoke and clouds are separated sisters divided only by latitude and silver linings.

#### Inspired by

*Manhattan*

George Grosz

PA-86-115

Gift of William H. and Eloise R. Chandler

Sam Grenrock – Poetry, MFA at UF

*first place*

### Vasque Bleu

–After Futamura Yoshimi

Failure speaks through the cracked vessel.  
It palpitates, a neutron star  
gathering its density to a single point,

a moment without alternatives.  
It claims the breath  
before beheading.

Failure gurgles with fired sugar,  
hardens as white char over accelerated rust.  
It grows between sentences,

between the body and the transplanted  
heart the body slowly rejects. Failure  
smells of the burnt offering still hot

to the touch. Touch it,  
and it collapses like a soufflé  
or a lung. My fingers imagine

the pitted skin of a meteorite,  
the last delusions of ice,  
beauty in its unraveling.

#### Inspired by

*Vasque Bleu*

Futamura Yoshimi

L2012.1.13

Loan from the Collection of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz

Austin Phillips – Mechanical Engineering at UF

*honorable mention*

### **incandescence**

an offset perspective  
distanced but directive  
all from a tiny light, projective  
with only one objective  
to be unselective  
while serving protective  
against darkness collective  
what can one speck give?  
a whole new perspective

### **Inspired by**

*Fivefold Sphere Projection Lamp*

Olafur Eliasson

2012.5

Gift of Debra and Dennis Scholl

Sam Kloppenburg – Philosophy at SFC

*honorable mention*

### **Fragments**

Part of something old  
Many parts, making new  
Piece by piece, red and gold  
Added few by few

Undulating paper trails  
Showing traveled paths  
Each tells a different tale  
Beaten blades of grass

Ripples here, ripples there  
Tied with metal wire  
Some of which had little tears  
Leads one to inquire

What memories are hidden  
In every piece involved?  
They lie behind these fragments  
And hang upon a wall

### **Inspired by**

*Old Man Cloth*

Ei Anatsui

2005.37

Museum purchase, funds provided by Friends of the Harn Museum

Rachel Reh – English and Political Science at UF  
*honorable mention*

### **Immersion**

My ritual begins in darkness,  
In lavender and in honeysuckle.  
Rose hip blossoms on bubbles  
That coalesce in the water  
Drawn from the flames of coals.

Like seeds, like blue cinders,  
Like a lover that draws his lips  
And fingertips from the heights of summer,  
Down from my toes  
To the wicker tongues of my scalp,

I kindle hot mist in my breath and my bone  
And float.  
My aquatic paramour,  
Her lure of twilight relief  
Licks from the brim of silence the  
Dark brown sugar of our solitude.

My ritual ends in steam, and in patience.  
Plump skin and fresh cotton  
Towelng off the daily chore.  
I am each droplet,  
Each daydream—withered and clamoring  
For the darker thorns of lily moonlight.

### **Inspired by**

*Apres le bain (After the Bath)*  
Alexander Archipenko  
2005.23.6  
Bequest of Ruth P. Phillips

Stacey Marquis – MA in Mass Communication/Journalism at UF  
*second place*

### **Nets-Infinity (TWOS)**

Out of the womb we spiral. We wrap our tiny fingers around our fathers' and float off the ground, giddy with the weightlessness of our souls. We spin around a person who makes our chest burn and flood at the same time. We swarm the sales rack at Ann Taylor to prepare for whirlwind job interviews. We loop around our fathers' blanketed hospice bed, puffing words into the air that should have already been there. We twirl through our own lives until we are bored enough to create another one. We circle down the drain until we spiral again. Our individual whirlpools rotate in sync with others to form a twisting galaxy inside a universe among many gyrating universes, and with that, the circuit is complete.

### **Inspired by**

*Nets-Infinity (TWOS)*  
Yayoi Kusama  
2006.40

Museum purchase, funds provided by the David A. Cofrin Acquisition Endowment and the Friends of the Harn Museum

decide to take a stroll.

Normally when I want to go for a walk, I amble through Central Park, the only part of this urban maze that even closely resembles home. But today, I instead go straight into town, heading toward Times Square, which is less dreary than the industrial sector, where I am impressed by the organized chaos of this crazy, yet strangely beautiful modern society. Yes, this place isn't like home or even like Paris. I am starting to notice that beyond the trash and the smog is something resplendent, which does make this place the center of the world. There are opportunities here. I have already begun to make a life for myself in this place. And I sense that my future is wrapped up in the potentialities of this metropolis. I don't want to go back to my old life. This is where my future lies. This is Manhattan and this is now my home.

**Inspired by**

*Manhattan*

George Grosz

PA-86-115

Gift of William H. and Eloise R. Chandler

Lani Yu – Psychology at UF

*Honorable mention*

**Heron Country**

The smell of wet earth rises in a green, bitter exhale, turning on the wind like a bird's flight feathers. After miles of open road, the cold seeping through car windows like a delicate frost, I find myself in wilderness, south of Philadelphia, alone. The mud under my boots

is rich with clay minerals and pale, straight trunks are my only landmarks. Patchy leaves gather at the tops of trees, resembling the heads of slender, unkempt giants. Dawn colors everything, limning the forest with fading pink light—far in the distance

I hear the echo of *roh-roh-roh*, a blue heron calling for its mate. Otherwise the bleak landscape holds itself silent, like a drawn breath when waiting for some unknown pricking. Home is the needle, pointing south when I fly north, as if the thread that tugs me across the sea

has gotten tangled in Florida underbrush. Through damp air and the dirt of winters without snow, I hike over fallen logs to glimpse a clearing flooded with water. By its dark reflection, framed by clumps of aquatic weeds, the scene reveals a depth of luminescence. A lone heron stands at the edge.

**Inspired by**

*Forest with Heron*

Herman Herzog

2014.28.1

Gift of Friends of the Harn Museum

## Manhattan

I wake up a minute too late and find myself hurrying along the dusty streets, late to work at the factory. I have become like everyone else, rushing through life, trying to get from one place to the next, getting lost in a blur of fast-moving congestion. This town is not what I expected. I grew up on a farm in Ohio. We grew corn and, to escape the sameness of our agricultural existence, often visited the nearby town where hardly anything eventful ever occurred. But then the war began, and I found myself fighting in Europe. I saw many farms, where people were destitute. I saw Paris for the first time, a shining beacon of light that was shattered and destroyed by the German Occupation. I liked that city a lot, despite its suffering, partially because I had always wanted to go there. When I returned to the states, I arrived in New York and found this job. I wrote to my father, and he encouraged me to stay here, because there's apparently no life for me back home.

I also decided to stay because I know that I have more opportunities for steady work but now I'm beginning to wonder I've made a mistake.

Even though I had dreamed of this place all my life, it is a dim place, not bright and shiny as I envisioned it. The Empire State Building still shines golden in the light of the sun. But underneath its heightening glory, it's a dirty mix of brown and gray. Smog chokes the air. Buildings seem to be stacked on top of each other, creating a skyline that appears to go on forever. Trash bags lie everywhere on the streets, disgorging their contents that are tinged gray and yellow by the smog. Every time I walk anywhere, the air feels sticky, as if the dirt and garbage are clinging to me.

I miss home. I miss the quiet, open fields of corn as far as the eye can see. I miss the vibrant colors of green and gold and feel of a cool breeze against my face. I miss the calmness and being close to nature. I even miss Europe. It was cleaner there and I don't

remember there being any smog.

I barely make it on time for work. The job I do as just a part of the assembly line is boring and tedious. I remember growing up and wanting to be anything but a farmer. Now I wish I were one.

My sister, Sarah, who lives in Brooklyn, is married with two kids and finds the city life a lot more stimulating to her cultural tastes, especially in fashion. I visit her whenever I can. Today, she has a business errand, so she meets me for lunch during my work break.

"Don't you miss it?" I ask her before I took a bite of a juicy roast beef sandwich.

"Miss what?" Sarah asks.

"Home."

"No, of course not. Why would I?"

"It was cleaner there, for one thing," I say. "And more calm. All the rush, all the hurry, it's starting to get to me."

"But we were poor," she says. "And we had no future there. Not like the future we have here."

"I liked the work better."

"But it wasn't consistent. Yes, working in a factory isn't glamorous, but at least you don't have to depend on rain to make a living. Plus, I don't know about you, but I hated farm work. It was very exhausting."

"Well, I guess so. Maybe."

"Wow," she said, laughing. "I can't believe my little brother is homesick."

I smile. "Yeah, I guess I am."

Sarah smiles and nods. "The grass might not be green here. But it's prosperous. And this place could become the center of the world. And besides, even though this isn't Paris, it wasn't damaged by bombs."

I haven't considered that. As much as I loved Paris, the effect of the war haunted me, and I've kept that in the back of my mind ever since.

"I guess that's true," I say.

I return to work, continuing my tedious, boring task that is consistent and always guarantees a paycheck. Once work is done, I

