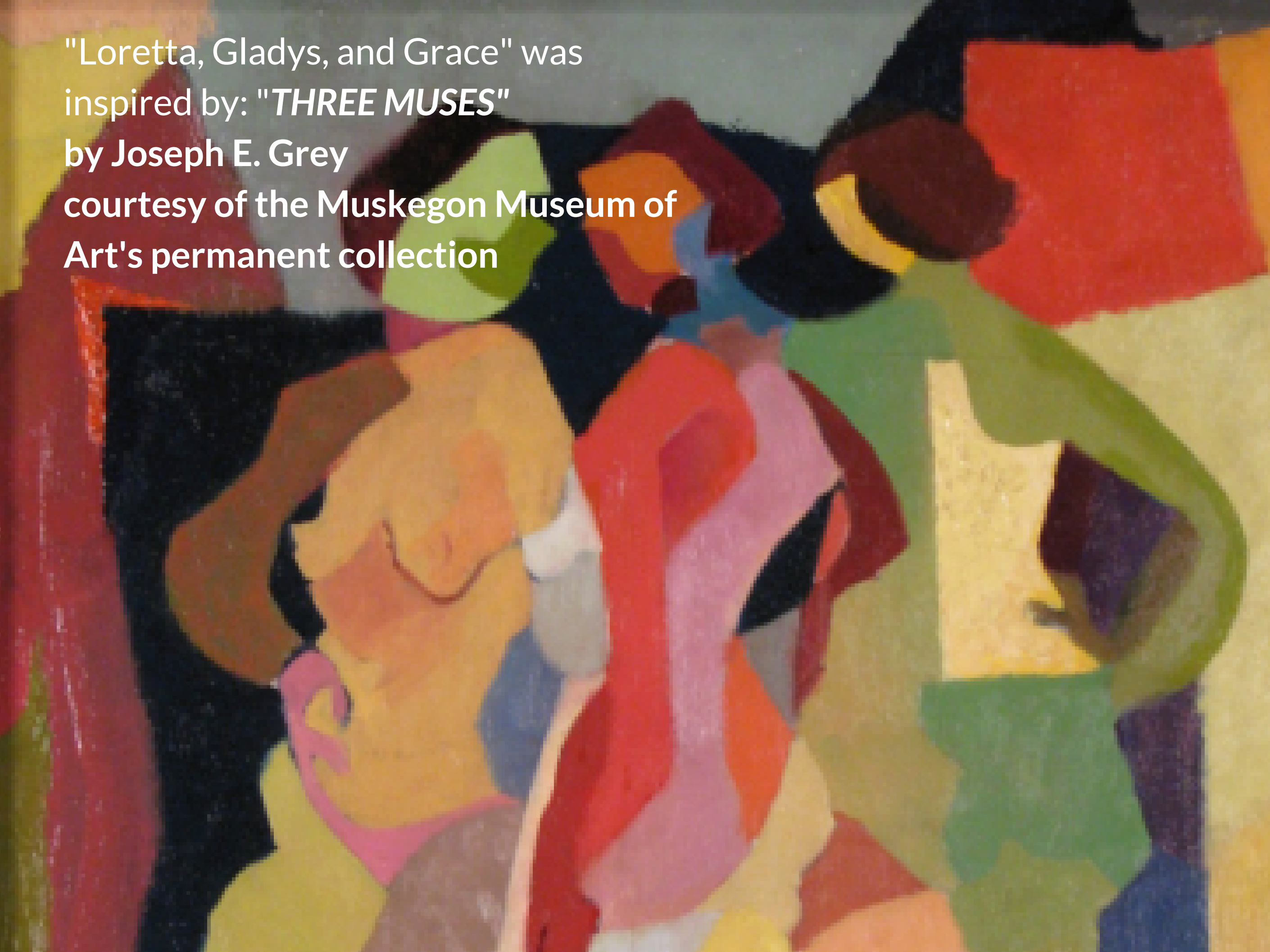




THE MUSKEGON MUSEUM OF ART

ART TALKS BACK

2020 AND 2021 WINNING SELECTIONS



"Loretta, Gladys, and Grace" was
inspired by: "*THREE MUSES*"
by Joseph E. Grey
courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection

ART TALKS BACK 2020 1ST PLACE AWARD

"Loretta, Gladys, and Grace"

BY GLORIA KLINGER

When I sit to write
three women come to play
with my explosion of ink on paper
or a pale grey dot
unsure if it's a comma or a knot.
The paper becomes a random pattern
of lines crossed out
or bracketed by their hips.
These women
circle around a word or phrase
with a curvy question -
which word, what break, who?
They love to smart mouth
my haughty words
and make a liar of me,
a knee jutting or elbow poking
at some shine posing for a camera

or my lazy beg for a compliment .
Sometimes they are so bold
I want to cover them
with claptrap robes
or shush them
with a finger smudge of ink .
Often they riff with whispers and snorts
a heart guffaw at my cliches
and rip the poem in half with their scorn.
Once they kicked the pen right out of my hand,
kicked my can to the curb with their sway.
These three stand in chorus line
coaxing me to come closer.

Are these my muses?
At times, when I believe
they are.

"Classic American Love Song" was inspired by:
"TIMELESSNESS OF LIFE: PAGES IN HISTORY" by Aminah Robinson
courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of Art's permanent collection



ART TALKS BACK 2020 2ND PLACE AWARD

"Classic American Love Song"

BY SUSAN JULIEN LARIMORE

At this moment, years ago, days ahead
there is always
time

to paint the house red
shop with girlfriends
walk the dog
get your nails done.

Today, back then, years from now
there is always
time

to bake a lemon pudding cake
for a grieving family or a daughter's birthday
slather peanut butter and jelly on soft white bread
for the kids with missing mothers, empty cupboards

In this instant, days gone by, and years ahead
there is always
time

to let our laughter float & frolic above
shower us like confetti sparkling in a brilliant sun
embrace strangers, share smiles,
hand out compliments like peppermints and
dance together 'til the color of our skin, dollars in our pockets
and who we love does not separate
our arms & hips & legs
as we sway to the beat together
clap our hands, shake our heads,
chirp and sing
the poetry of nightingales

There is always time

for this.

"Body Image" was inspired by:

"THREE MUSES"

by Joseph E. Grey

courtesy of the Muskegon Museum
of Art's permanent collection



ART TALKS BACK 2020 3RD PLACE AWARD

"Body Image"

BY VICTORIA EVERITT

I'm only just a mirror, you see.

Well, actually, I'm three in one, a tri-fold mirror,

The kind they used to have in ladies' clothing shops?

Women went in nooks called dressing rooms --

Although undressing happened, too --

And stripped down to their underthings,

"Unmentionables" they were,

And sometimes even those were shed

To don the frocks and smocks and skirts

That might fit well enough to purchase but usually did not

Such a lot of bodies stood before me in those days,

Bodies of every size and shape and age,

And such a lot of eyes, ten thousand eyes!

The eyes, you see, they were the same,

So focused, narrowed, judge and jury;
They didn't like what they saw and sometimes
cried ,
Even if the garment fit, indubitably then.
When I was new, I took it much to heart.
Was I responsible? They're looking right at me!
But as I aged, untarnished still,
I finally understood
That I did just what I was made to do,
A magic trick with silver and with light.
I'm only a mirror, you see, a trinity of mirrors,
And to this day I've never known
Just why they shed those tears.



"Hey You" was inspired by:
"Game Bus" by Kadir Nelson
courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection



ART TALKS BACK 2020 - HONORABLE MENTION

"Hey You"

BY VONDALEE KNOLL

Hey You!

You look at me - the one girl on that bus. You're askin' yerself,
Who's that one girl with a bus full of fellers?
That's what you're thinkin', right?

Who's that one girl? And chances are you're not thinkin' virgin.
You're not thinkin' wholesome/
What comes into your dirt old mind?

That's me in that picture! Keep your dirty old thoughts to yerself,
Because that's me - Constance Enola Morgan -
And I am somebody!

So tell me, when you look at me, when you look at me, nineteen years old
Five foot four, and a hundred thirty five pounds,
What do you really think?

You're sure not thinkin' ball player, right hander, second baseman.
No, you're thinkin' career
Battin' average .368, are ya?

The better 'n Ty Cobb, for your information. But you're not thinkin'
That girl can play catcher good as anyone. She's so quick
She can pull a ball out of thin air

And throw like the wind. Nope.
You won't be thinkin' that. See me lookin' out
The winder in a bus full of fellas?

Mister, in that there picture, you should see how I am happy.
I am playin' in the Negro American League because I am good!
Better n' a man, if you want to know.

With all those men they put me in third line to bat
'Cause I am fast, and I hit like a man.
They put me there to win the game.

Ten grand a season, mister,
I am little Connie Morgan from Philly,
And I am playin' ball.





"Comes Into the Light" was inspired by:

"THREE MUSES"

by Joseph E. Grey

courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection

ART TALKS BACK 2020 HONORABLE MENTION

"Comes Into the Light"

BY MARTHA COLBURN

Well Ladies, What are we doing later? It's been a long session. These lights are hot tonight. But the fan is hitting me right on my left boob. I almost didn't come today, How about you, Sue? How's your little one? How's her croup? Have you been getting any rest at all? Norma, are you MAD at me? Why so stand-offish? Are you coming out with us tonight? How's your man, Stan? Still giving you the blues, with his slimey moves? Men! Who needs them? Can't trust them. Don't understand them. Can't seem to live without them. My knees are locked. My thigh keeps cramping, Bananas, I hear, are really good for that! Wish I hadn't had that pizza for lunch. I feel so bloated. Do you think my stomach is looking poochey? I used to be so flat bellied-slim!

Those were the days & nights, ah, the nights...When I was young. & my legs! Always had dancer's legs. Strong & lean . Made for leaping & twirling.

jAnyway, here we are, standing under these hot lights. It looks like we don't even care. All those students. Staring at us with their pouty lips & piercings. Trying to look like they might be the next Picasso. We don't even get to see the masterpieces. How do they see us? What do they think we think? Do they see that our legs are cramping, our stomachs growling & our lower backs aching? Stripped down to naked truth. Standing before them with sweaty, hairy pits. Exposed to the Universe. Feet oversized & swollen. Butt full of ripples (used to be curvy). Now it's just flab.

Norma! What's WRONG with you anyway? You haven't even moved! Are you frozen into your chubby calves? Are you locked down in loneliness? Did your man leave you? Did you discover that he likes young men afterall? Did he find a svelte young dancer to take your place? Now that you've gone all slime green, puke pink & yellow angles? Bowed-down from the standing, bowed-over from the glaring? All of your privacies having been seen. All of your dream-lands having been had. You're just like the rest of us now, bulges & back fat. Elbows ebbing with silly putty & bat wings flowing from shoulders that slope unevenly. Throat full of ripples & ravaged edges. Once you had a sculpted chin, haughty and audacious.

We only have another 30 minutes. Then we can move. Move, blessedly move! Stretch the knotted shoulders, gone green now, with the gazes of young artists.

So, tell me-

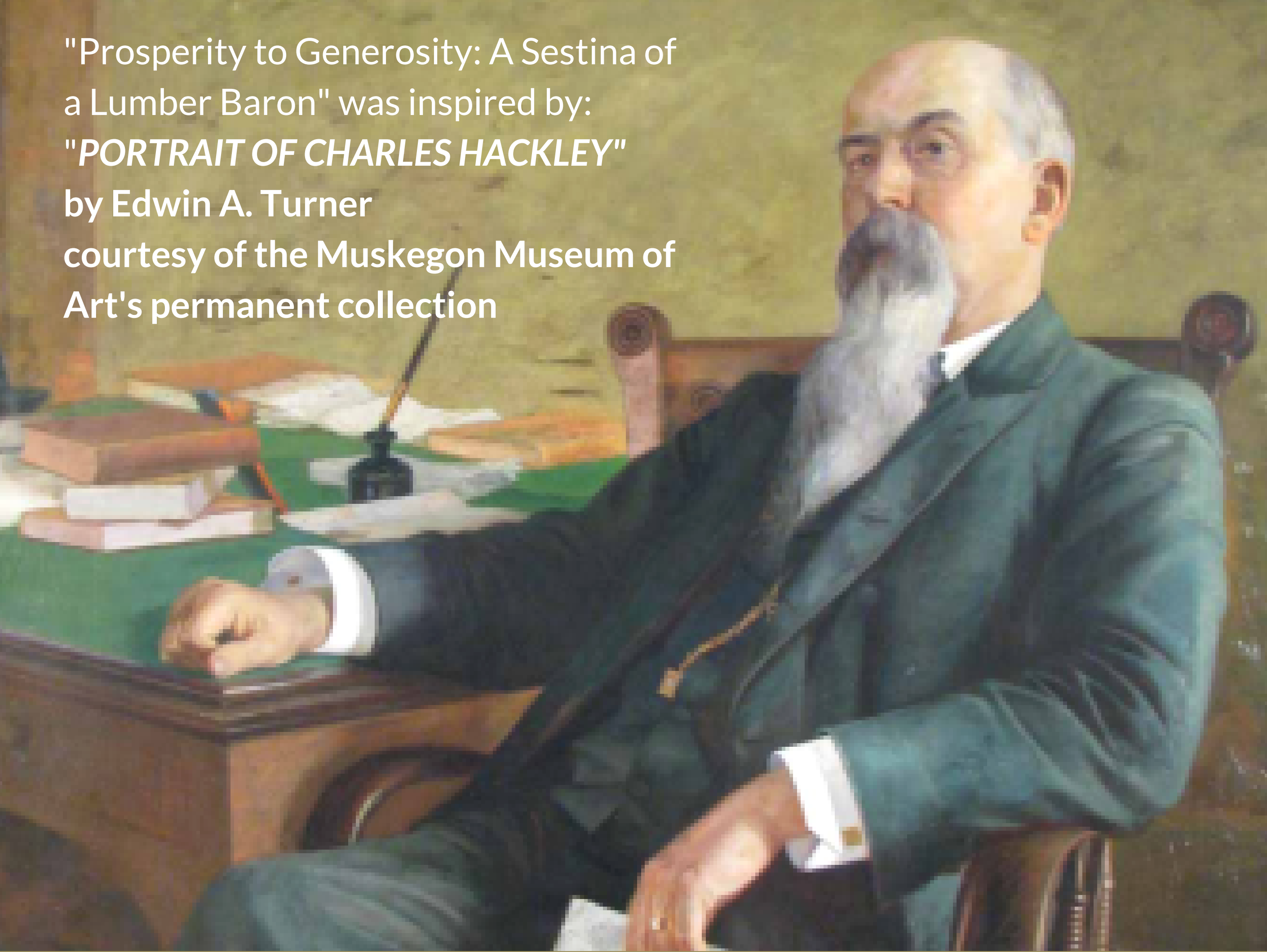
Does this hot light

Make me

Look Fat tonight?



"Prosperity to Generosity: A Sestina of
a Lumber Baron" was inspired by:
"PORTRAIT OF CHARLES HACKLEY"
by Edwin A. Turner
courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection



ART TALKS BACK 2020 HONORABLE MENTION

"Prosperity to Generosity: A Sestina of a Lumber Baron"

BY CAROL VOIGTS

There they stood - tall, green and wild
No one yet thinking how to be prospering
White pine - even oak and ash - giants standing ready to waste
Sven and Johan and Stanley were now to cross paths
A hoard, a mass descendant into this place and time
Sawing, chopping, creaking, crashing became so natural

Settlers rushed in and changed what was natural
And camps with flapjacks and whiskey - wooly and wild
The long winters and log jammed rivers waited their time
Some men - a few - were financed, were borrowing, were prospering
Horses pulled, tugged and dragged their logs down paths
At river's mouth each sawmill knew no waste

Entrepreneurs, millionaires, money to make, no time to waste
While never-ending logs seemed now so natural

The mill owners following their destiny, their paths
A forest, cut and sawn, has lost its wild
Towns are built from this pine, growing and prospering
Could there ever be a better time?

Schemes, dreams, maybe greed came in time
Take it all, leave nothing, do not waste
What's a tree for but to keep us prospering?
Build the barns, the mansions, the stables, it's natural
We've done this with our own hands, out of the wild
Hansey, Luke and Ole labor and dream too in those paths

Who among us would not want such a path?
But those schemes, dreams and wondrous plans run out in time
Bankruptcies, ruin, finances gone wild
The mansions, lost riches, the debt, the waste
Recovery, even again deserted, and shame so natural
Though Peder, Karl, and Jerome remain, these steadily, slowly prospering

T'was one whose city selflessly he helped in prospering
While others who made it had squandered their paths
This man, revered, amiable, eager, achievements so natural, now gone in time
And even as he gained his wealth, Hackley cherished learning and common good
The barn that once held the horses still remains nearby guarding his legacy of education
His mansion, his library, his museum, his schools, his hospital - the ripples are still going out

Most fell away into neglected paths of history
For some, what had begun as wild thus returned to the natural
Yet for one, even while prospering, no paths he wasted for our future



"Escaping the Labyrinth" was inspired
by: **"MINOTAUR READING"**
by Beth Carter
courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection

ART TALKS BACK 2021 1ST PLACE AWARD

"Escaping the Labyrinth"

BY DIANA DINVERNO

I sat in Battery Park wiping sleep from
my eyes
when the Minotaur, horns sharp as
stilettos,
breath scented with blood, settled
beside me,
and I was afraid.
He opened his large hand,
revealed a gun,
said I don't want to die alone.
I looked into his eyes, saw a cursed
mother,
father, a sacrifice to corrupt gods,
a wounded creature,
half one thing, half another,
like most, like me.
Do you know poetry?

When he shook his massive head,
I recited words committed to memory,
my companions in darkness,
that lifted us off the bench,
above the labyrinth to see earth tip
into a new day, unspooling its bright
thread to reveal our means of escape.
I didn't know, he said,
and stared into the gilded harbor,
its ever-changing waters.
He put away the gun, followed me
into the waking city, past Wall Street's
bull—trapped in its own myth—stopped
before a book store on Broadway,
peered in while I faded
into morning's rush.
Sometimes, I catch a glimpse
of him in the park, bent forward
in concentration, a book,
edged with light,
in his hands.



"The Minotaur" was inspired by:

"MINOTAUR READING"

by Beth Carter

courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection



ART TALKS BACK 2021 2ND PLACE AWARD

"The Minotaur"

BY VICTORIA EVERITT

When horses flew and Titans walked
And vows were oft forsworn,
Some moment when the gods were
crazed Then surely I was born.
With monstrous head and bullish horns
And tail like tattered strings,
I was Poseidon's punishment
On all two-legged things.
Ferocious outlaw of the Earth,
Of ancient crooked will,
Imprisoned, hated, feared was I--
Yet one soul loved me still!
My frame trapped in the labyrinth,
My mind was always freed:
My mother, daughter of the Sun,
Had taught me how to read.



"Lifeline for a Minotaur " was inspired by:
"MINOTAUR READING"
by Beth Carter
courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection

ART TALKS BACK 2021 3RD PLACE AWARD

"Lifeline for a Minotaur"

BY SARAH MCELRATH

Heavy head, bowed but not yet broken
I stumble through the words, stagger
through sentences searching for
meaning
desperate to find a way out of this
labyrinth
full of too many abrupt dead ends
They would be better off without me
or sudden turns from light to dark
I'll never get better
months where I seem to go backward
when I should be going forward.
Reading one word after another
I push forward, ignoring false turns
in my brain that lead to a complete stop
—

I'm a burden
They wish I'd disappear forever
—seeking commas, semi-colons
another chapter, the next book in the
series
clutching tight to words laid out by
heroes
who wandered this maze of depression
and lived to tell the tale.
I consume their stories
pages scattered one after the other
like bread crumbs to guide me
to assure me I am not alone
tell me I can find a way out
convince me
I am not a monster.



"Red, He Read" was inspired by:
"MINOTAUR READING"
by Beth Carter
courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection

ART TALKS BACK 2021 HONORABLE MENTION

"Red, He Read"

BY CJ GIROUX

Perhaps, dinner—piles of strawberry
blond hair tied back in a braid,
body draped with the white sheer of tribute
— places the book (a mother's urging,
a guilty present) along a pebbled path.
Perhaps, pages foretell fantastical futures
far (of Avignon, Greystoke) and near:
a boy wishing for wings, air scented by sand;
a father, his ginger whiskers a hedge of
thorns, joins eider, beeswax, bits of
branches.
Or perhaps, parchment prompts longings: a
summer field of the day's eye,
drooping heads of love-lives-bleeding;
wreaths of bittersweet in autumn;
the blush of Lenten rose in melting snow.

Or, maybe this gilded gift,
a primer of love, scarlet madness, revenge,
offers rules, a language he knows:
a before b; be before see;
cause, effect; exposition, resolution.
He leans into yew, scarlet brambles,
climbing blaze. Bronze words draw breath, as
black hieroglyphs on yellow
hold still, then slip with a *shhh*
like walls in a house of cards.
A ruby thread in the footer is a lifeline linking
page to page as the Mintoaur moves out of
shadow into story, out of story into shadow—
his, ours— from Other to other, a shimmering
pink light, the world aglow and pulsing with
blood.



"2020" was inspired by:

"MINOTAUR READING"

by Beth Carter

courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection

ART TALKS BACK 2020 HONORABLE MENTION

"2020" for Jillian

BY MARIA ROOKS

Today, on the sidewalk
I found a tooth, a real human molar,
Set as a gemstone in a homemade ring made of wire.
It was one of those weird, compassless moments
Of my day and now you
Are reading about it in the pages of this little book
Which you picked up seeking directions,
Hope, or maybe just diversion
From the dark corners of this maze that is your mind.
You feel trapped, like Cronus, snapped,
When he castrated Uranus and threw his bloody balls
Away, creating Space and Time
And the permanent possibility of panic at what might never
be,
Or the misery of the mundane
March inside your own horned-head.

jl get it. I have those moments of morass too.
This year, my daughter gave the eulogy
At her best friend's funeral--killed at 21 in a biking accident.
How do you navigate the sadness? The Loss?
The feeling that you want to crawl out of your own skin?
In this life.
But those are questions, not answers.
Here is what's true:
Eternity, a step out of this labyrinth,
Is everything all at once,
There are no gods, only God.
Grace and mercy walk beside us,
And promises hold our hands.
But for Now, Here,
In the plotless pilgrimage, sometimes
We only get a tooth in a ring
Made of wire.





"Minotaur" was inspired by:
"MINOTAUR READING"
by Beth Carter
courtesy of the Muskegon Museum of
Art's permanent collection

ART TALKS BACK 2020 HONORABLE MENTION

"Minotaur"

BY JEANNE VANWEIREN

He moves swiftly down the narrow corridors,
His clublike feet jammed into clumsy boots, his little eyes rimmed with red. His
stubby horns stab at the paintings hanging on the time-stained walls.
He knows there are terrified people sheltering behind the doors.
He can smell them, sweat mixing with expensive fragrance.
He feeds on the fear. He was called forward in an explosion of sparks and hatred and
fear. He raises his bovine muzzle and bellows, a raw and raspy noise.
Suddenly he pulls up, cocks his head when something on the floor
Catches his eye. A book. Tossed down in a celebration of chaos by some other
destroyer Or dropped in desperation by someone fleeing the terror.
He picks it up and studies it, opens it, scans its pages.
He quiets. His breathing calms, his nostrils relax, his ears flick forward.
He is rapt in his reading, eyes locked on words.

Will the alchemy of absorbing thoughts and stories change him, show him a new pathway in the pages?
Or will he shrewdly turn ideas into weapons, tools to intensify the hatred? He is Schrodinger's cat in this moment, both saved and unsaved, redeemed and persecutor. What effect will this catalyst create?
Those of us watching from a distance cannot predict.
We can only wait.
And see.





Special thanks to our Art
Talk Back Committee and
judges: Jerry Lang, Paula
Doctor, and Al Burton