

Poems in Sum:1 with images

that inspired them: page numbers refer to the page in the book.¹

1: Photographs by Author



The preface poem (page 9) is inspired by the photo cover of this Temple in Kyoto, Japan

Sacred Corridor

Each gate, an offering,
gift
 extending an invitation—

Each gate, equal; receiving—

perhaps a request for a wish to come true—
perhaps an offering to honor sacred spirits—

each perhaps starts to ribbon the posts
along with the sun's swirls
reflected in the pale red paint—
that all of us may be at peace—
all. one.

¹ Note p. 9, 18, 20 : due to formatting issues, these poems are not in Sum:1 as originally planned; only on this PDF.

***Sum:1* is available from:**

<http://www.foothillspublishing.com/2021/jospe.html>

About this book:

The title, ***Sum:1*** rhymes with *someone* but is not meant as a pun. This small book of poems addresses the humane concern of treating each person as a unique and valuable **Someone**, where the **bolding** of the word and its capital S is not ignored or discounted.

The sum of all of us, one by one, should be one, and yet in this country which promises liberty and justice for all, we know about the removal of so many from this “all”.

Proceeds for this book will be given to East House, Rochester, NY: <https://easthouse.org>
East House helps move lives forward by providing stable housing and support services to individuals with persistent mental health and/or substance use disorders.

Although donations are voluntary, after viewing these photos, and poems, readers are invited to consider donating \$5, \$10 or more to East House using the donation button on this link:

<http://bit.ly/3rqecEf>

Please let the author know at kjospe@gmail.com so she too can thank you.

Sum:1/Some: One

What is the product of one times one?
We forget sometimes how one multiplies—
how it gently mirrors the other to allow
the other...
1X2 has no one reflected but two in the end.

Some is only so many...
but turn it to sum,
before difference enters in—
before product
before the second meaning of quotient—
as characteristic.

Any minus
one equals
complexity
at its most irresponsible best.
It could be you, me, or all those hoping
like us, the bomb won't drop
on us, on those close to us,
those hoping whatever ship sails in
doesn't fool us with its colors.
—Kitty Jospé (read at Just Poet Open Mic, July 16, 2020)

Invitation

page 11

“anything multiplied by 1 is itself.”

Come walk with me in the cathedral arch
made by living tree painting its shadow.
With echoes of past ages
let us share the possibles
of each one of us,
divvied expansions—
view by view.

There will never be a surfeit of tango here:

shapes *w*

wind circles *o*

humming *m*

leading *e*

in rite of spring *n*

breathing *m*

strumming *e*

whispering *n*

until being one, or another
doesn't make a difference.



Ganondagan, NY

The lake under icy rain, roils to call
the tide may rise, the tide may fall—
Life pulses on despite covid news
as waves crash and a lone gull mews—
pelleted by wind but holding his ground
above the crash of the thunderous sound
of waves as they crest and furl, rise and fall.

The wind whips the lake to roil and call
cresting, furling, my waves rise and fall
as we from the town observe the surge
of heaving waters, feel the wind's scourge
driving ice-cuts of rain against our face.
We hasten to shelter to observe the place
livened by the roar, the roil, the crash;
it will continue when we are but ash—
but for this day, how lucky we feel—
to witness waves, the storm as real.



Lake Ontario, Ontario Beach Park, Rochester, NY

***On finishing a 1,500 piece puzzle of Dutch Proverbs by Breughel
(Known as “Topsy-Turvy World”)***

page 21

How little has changed since 1559,
still deserving these proverbs about wishbones,

baskets of light, lies of blue, slippery eels,
head bangers, pillar biters and pies on the roof...

As for finding the right spot for each piece—
the puzzle is perfect prelude to life’s fugue.

There are successes like distinguishing the golds
of wheat ready for harvest from a sounder

of swine; surprises at what seems the same,
eventually finding its own improbable difference.

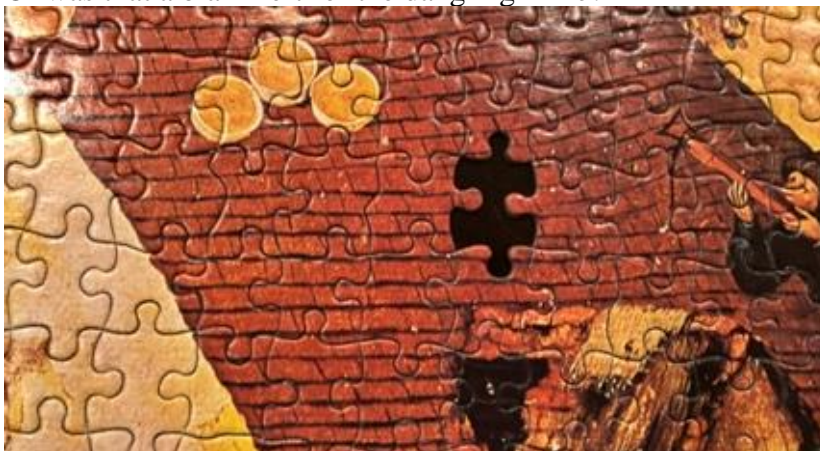
Take for instance, the archer aiming at the arrow
he already shot and the cards in pieces, falling

into place. Eventually it is finished—
but with six pieces missing. Tell me,

how does that matter?
Perhaps there’s a proverb for the merit of finishing

in spite of a missing piece like those stitches
allegedly taken in time preventing disaster...

Or was that a blank left for the dangling knife?



Detail of a picture puzzle of “Netherlandish Proverbs” by Pieter Breughel
<https://www.ekphrastic.net/ekphrastic/netherlandish-proverbs-by-kitty-jospe>

You could say the shadow, sliding off
the two peaked ears of wind-bitten bluffs,

creates a wolf-head—
suggests fractions involved with wearing—

pelt of rain above, assault of waves below, uprooting
the overstory close to the edge of the bluffs—

and hear a long howl of what was,
a hint of what can haunt us—

then it is easy to add a chapter about that tree branch
brandishing its clout like a megaphone.

But what happens when those spires of ancient chimneys
are leveled, no mandible visible?



Chimney Bluffs, Sodus, NY

I call him *Angelo*, humbled by his presence,
grateful for whatever message angels deliver.
Some might judge him as infirm, useless—
but if you saw him, you too would be intrigued
by his medieval-style tunic tightened
under his protuberant belly, his long
grizzled beard, falling from the shadow
of his hat to glint in the sun as he leans
on his cane, making his way.

18 years ago, our eyes didn't meet, and all I have
is this shot of a slightly filled pouch slung on his back.
I study him now as a yet unscripted character—
his bent frame in faded red smock, baggy pants—
perhaps just shuffling out of a version
of a crucifixion scene.

It is only now, in this snapshot, I see he is walking past
a door with a full-length mirror reflecting a brick wall,
the old stones blocking what should be a gateway
through which to enter, exit. Am I sure?
No matter, the wall didn't stop him then,
and nothing has stopped me from still thinking
about him now. Can you imagine ... all of us
catching such chance glimpses—
that continue to matter so much?



Venezia, Good Friday, 2003

Our shadows step out of our shoes,
consider centuries
as sun melts tar in the ties.

But what is not in the picture
is what happened that night
to George Floyd

nor five days later
when the sound of a helicopter
and the way the light at the end of the day hits
only certain leaves as protesters gather
and a screen in the window of a gallery,
(closed for the pandemic)
flashes white letters on a black background
every other second
STOP KILLING BLACK PEOPLE.

And now, our shadows step into
different shoes, feel the slash
of real bodies, on ties
to then on that railroad,
the sense of North,
of star.



Railroad Bridge over the Genesee River between Orleans and Canandaigua, NY.

Just Visiting

—Tribute to Volume One, *fertile ground*

I hold a booklet, “JUST VISITING” conceived in the 21st century, held together in the center
by red thread.

just faces *visiting*

just in white letters on black

visiting on conventional white background—

just as in merely, simply,

visiting as in being in a place,

just as in equitably

visiting a person for a short time for reasons of
sociability, politeness, business, curiosity,

just *visiting.*

Sometimes, a map is *just* a tool
and there is no *just*

visiting to define *redlining*,
visiting.

Let us delve deeper into *just*
what another finds worthy, just;

visiting (respectfully) to find out
visiting transforming, reviving.

Let us delve into **division**:

drop

the divide,
stop the toss of loaded die visioning together.
stop the burning crosses, turn *visit* to *visiON*

neighborhood by

neighborhood.

This site fertilegroundroc.org; will bring you to some of the pictures taken and questions posed
in the collaboratively designed booklet, *Just Visiting* (2019).

Although the poem does not have red thread binding to reflect the red thread in the center, like
the redlining of districts, having more freedom in this PDF to hollow out the word **JUST**
and juxtapose it with visiting allowed a better representation than on smaller pages of the book.

about co-authors, Kathryn Mariner and Miguel A. Cardona. Mariner is Assistant Professor
of Anthropology and Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester. Cardona is
Assistant Professor of New Media Design at Rochester Institute of Technology.

The tiles, what could cover up, embellish.
They are at risk; and the building shows great wear.

Sometimes it takes an extra lens to catch
details, like the feather resting on the stone
by the mosaic flowers. Why this feather
at the base of this pillar now?
It looks as if left as an offering.

What traces do we leave?
Chipped tile, one feather leaving from
a wing of a bird flying through,
small pieces that carry on.



detail of Coimbra University, Portugal



*In the Old Monastery of Santa Clara in
Coimbra, Portugal (page 41)*

In this medieval monastery you can imagine
the nuns singing, as they did for hundreds of
years
about the mystery of things... O mistério
das coisas.
I hear their voices echoing as if raising the
floors
after another flood above the mud of the
Montego...
singing of the mystery of miracles and how
when Queen Isabel was caught, the wrapped
bread
in her cloak for the poor, had become roses
when revealed.
O mystery of history suggested as the light
enters
the skeletons of reconstructed stone arches,
ignites our imagination
to paint rose on stone.
O mistério das coisas...



***Many Thanks to John Mariner for posting this poem on his website:
http://www.tbshstudio.com/jospe/jospe_poems.html*

Looking through Woods with Hourglass Shapes page 43

I look at the V of sky, above—
lacy leaf of ash fronds
in the spill of it—
pressing into
the blue,

and below
a golden oval of hay framed
by cedars to make a perfect hourglass
as if holding the intimacy of discrete moments—

I hadn't noticed the shape until now, with everyone gone.

In the foreground I still hear our laughing,
croquet and silliness coloring
the who of us—
over
the years
as insistent as
the Northern White-Throat
who continues to whistle *sam peabody peabody*—
that song of forever that feeds us even as time runs out.



posted on http://www.tbshstudio.com/jospe/jospe_poems.html

I look at my arm, imagine I have no name,
imagine the step towards a mass grave etched
in the skin. To counter the unimaginable,
imagine a parrot with me, at dawn—

To counter the unimaginable, look at the real light
painting the sky red
and if you ask my bird to recite
something, it will be the recording of his teacher
chanting ancient Sanskrit—
the exact embodiment of the incantations
for peace he received three hours every day.

If you don't believe in my bird, at least notice
the real reflection of lamps in the window,
like flying saucers of light
as the sun rises in the frame of the window,
against the fuchsia backdrop of sky.

They wobble on candlesticks,
dancing like halos of angels

All this fades as daylight takes over.

But not the mantra for peace. If we know
such a chant for well-being, wholeness for all
is real, the echoes help us survive, allow us
to be grateful should we wake
to a new sunrise.



picture of sunrise through my daughter's dining room window, Dec. 2019

Old house, barn silhouetted on the hill,
two empty chairs on the porch remain still.

You can barter the boards of the old battered barn
in its dust bowl days; spin alive its chattering yarn,

the 24/7 wait in the widow's watch, now windowless crown;
as the moon out of thick cloud, falls on the exhausted home.

You can hear the ghosts whispering in the creak of the chairs
by the silvering light, descending the abandoned stairs

The house leaking with the wind's moan, and sagging—
the groaning wind, through the broken boards flagging

under the strain of gathering the past, to make repair—
but only the ghosts speak the past's presence there.



photos: Nick Jospé: Western NY State



At first perhaps you only see
twin birch, as if conversing over
a fence. Perhaps you can't hear
them breathing through
their lenticels as they primp
for spring, their hormones harping
inner music in the outward strum
of silence as we wait for the end
of winter. A perfect time to tap
their sweet sap.

What matter to them someone
has placed a fence smack dab
between their rooted toes? What
matter that the loose granite has been
gathered as if by directive
to be a wall or that these fields
be divvied by wooden stakes?

In this time of pandemic, the birch
will unfold the first leaves, regardless,
reveal once again these green hearts
that whisper in the wind.



Londonderry, VT

Everything livens in the sun's warmth—
this moment, memories—

The light softly, yet firmly
kisses the lipped lantern windows
with a whisper of movement
as the moss grows tight
on their granite hats.

In this sacred space, we meditate
at the speed of the heart, understand
a generosity of moss to bandage
what is cracked, at risk of breaking,
feel its soft green as living hope.



Ishidourou (Japanese Stone Lanterns, Kyoto, Japan)

I learn it means thank you in modern Greek,
with the reciprocal meaning of gift
granted and received—

an overtone sneaks
in to imply exchange of grace
like these trees—

They stretch empty branches—
more like dancing wraiths in space
seen from the highway

behind the dividing yellow line,
beyond the guardrail...
 each naked twig pliant—
 receives the rising fog
 like a shroud of the old year.

I can tell you this, show you the picture,
but that won't play you the music
I hear, like an antique choir
singing about *Kairos* —that opportune
moment beyond any counting—
all the interwoven intricacy
in a psalm of praise—
Eucharisto.
Eucharisto.



taken (iPhoto) while driving on highway

Starting the New Year with Perhaps

Perhaps there is magic in each stick,
but the man who holds the staff
with two hands understands
 those who must rely on one stick,
 the other hand resting on a staff
 of a shoulder of another... understands
each is a guide, a measuring yardstick
for the long voyage ahead. Each staff
is a comfort, a balance each understands
 must necessarily happen if using (as stick)
 the shoulder of the one ahead. The staff
 of life is more than bread; each understands
perhaps.

Perhaps at first, the one-eyed man wore a white bandage over the damaged eye. His good eye, pushed to the brim of the socket stared ahead, and he whispered reassurance, angled as it was, to the blind behind him. And the blind, each placing a hand on the shoulder of the one in front, or grasping a piece of a shawl, a bit of veil, followed. How do we know dark? If you are blind, can you feel the fall of light, the gathering of dusk transforming to hours of night? It has been so long they have traveled, numbed by the weariness of the endlessness. They do not see how black the bandage has become, do not dare to imagine the words of the leader are not like the mud, the dust they will become.

Perhaps... *Peut-être, (can be...)vielleicht, (much light)*
and seven words in Japanese with shades of meaning
from probably, presumably to possibly, hopefully filled in
with sight.



Poem inspired by this work-in-progress by Lynne Feldman
entitled: "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king."

2. Poems Inspired by Art Work

Page # of Poem in Sum:1

p. 19: *Today I'm in Havana*²

**p. 38 *Porcelain Desire*

p. 39 *Mélancolie*³

p. 40 *Where do you go*⁴

p. 48 *Placement*⁵

p. 53 *Rokeby Venus*

p. 55 *Portrait of Facteur Roulin*

p. 54 *What the Paint Can Do*⁶

**p. 58 *You were never really here*

p. 59 *Questions for the Night Drinker*⁷ fragment (200 AD) “*Los Bebedores*”

**p.60 *My Friend Painted Angels*

p. 66 *Spared*

Artist:Title

Robert Gniewek : *Ave. del Puerto- Havana*

Jennifer McCurdy : *Vortex Vessel*

Albert György : *Mélancolie*

Edward Hopper : *New York Movie 1939*

Lorette C. Luzajic : *The Best is Yet to Come*

Diego Velázquez : *Rokeby Venus*

Van Gogh : *Postman Joseph Roulin, 1888*

Van Gogh : *Self Portrait 1887*

Jeff Suszczynski : *You Were Never Really Here*

fragment (200 AD) “*Los Bebedores*”

Lynne Feldman: *Apparition*

Adriana ippel Slutzky : *Seat of Forgetting and Remembering (Author's photo)*

**Many Thanks to John Mariner for posting these poems on his website:

http://www.tbshstudio.com/jospe/jospe_poems.html

² published by Arnot Art Museum, “*Visions and Voices*”, summer 2020; the poem responded to the Gwienek photo in the exhibit, *High Fidelity: Anthony Brunelli and Digital Age Photorealists*.

³ the poem published 10/24/2018 with a placeholder. <https://www.ekphrastic.net/ekphrastic/melancolie-by-kitty-jospe>

⁴ <https://www.ekphrastic.net/ekphrastic/where-do-you-go-by-kitty-jospe>, published 4/2/2019

⁵ poem published among many on 3/13/20 responding to Luzajic's work, “*The Best is Yet to Come*”
<https://www.ekphrastic.net/ekphrastic/ekphrastic-responses-lorette-c-luzajic>

⁶ Sunlight Press: <https://www.thesunlightpress.com>

⁷ poem published on 7/12/2020 <https://www.ekphrastic.net/ekphrastic/questions-for-the-night-drinker-by-kitty-jospe>

Tentacular Thinking

might be helpful to examine our murders of each other... and question
this idea of what *should never have been* — how it might make room

for a worldwide response to CEOs of our destruction— to put what we thought
unthinkable, naked on the table— critical room

for what might possibly provide arms and avenues to help us feel empathy
in our search for a word in any of the 6,500 languages in the world with room

for all. Something as basic as *breath*, or *spirit*, or merely the sound of *ruach*
in Hebrew, *rwh* in its rivery flow, *ruh-an*, in Arabic, providing a peaceful room,

not raving, riled-up rage. But who am I to say, as anger filled me on hearing
an unintentionally hurtful remark. Of course we all have room

for improvement. We darken like the best of octopods, flail arms in retort.
No need to raise bristles, we just need to find the key to unlock the room

of interconnected infinite. It works like a nerve net for Cnidarians that allows swimming
along without fear by removing alarm. All is well, returning to neutral and find the room

with 400 panels of skin color, hue, labeled by the first name of the sitter. All of us, fitting,
shifting in our shades to make room

for each other.



Synecdoche by Bryon Kim (multipanel) <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/byron-kim-synecdoche>

Notes about Artists

Robert Gniewek: p. 17 *Today I'm in Havana*— inspired by photograph *Ave del Puerto, Havana* (His photo and my poem in *Visions and Voices*, a project based on photographs in the exhibit “High Fidelity: Anthony Brunelli and Digital Age Photographers” originally intended for February-May 2020 at Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, NY.

Little Walter: p. 31 *Threading the Blues*— the lyrics to *Dead Presidents* as he sings them are in italics in the poem.
https://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/l/little_walter/dead_presidents.html

Jennifer McCurdy: p.36: *Porcelain Desire*— inspired by her porcelain work entitled *Vortex Vessel*.
<https://www.jennifermccurdy.com/currentwork.shtml>

Albert György: p. 37 *Mélancolie* —inspired by a picture of the sculpture, *Mélancolie*
<https://totallybuffalo.com/replicas-and-prints-available/>

Edward Hopper: p.38: *Where do you go*—inspired by his painting, *New York Movie 1939*

Nicolas Jospé: p.43 *What's Left- II*— inspired by his photography of rural Western, NY

Vincent Van Gogh p. 52 and p.53: *Portraits*: Vincent Van Gogh: Self Portrait 1887; Postman Joseph Roulin, 1888;

Lorette C. Luzajic: p. 46 *Placement* — inspired by her artwork (mixed media) *The Best Is Yet To Come*

Jeff Suszczyński p. 56 *You Were Never Really Here*: inspired by his collage *you were never really here* [#3]
[February, 2019] <https://www.tinhornplanet.com/visual-art/collage>

Lynne Feldman: p. 58 *My Friend Painted Angels*: inspired by her collage, *Apparition* <http://lynnefeldman.com/paintings-collages>. <https://www.wrapyourselfinart.com/all-blankets/apparition>

Antonio Porchia: p. 63 *Linking Lines of Frederick Douglass and Antonio Porchia*. The line “*Some things become such a part of us that we forget them*” from *Voces* /“*Voices*”, (used with Golden Shovel technique) comes from Porchia’s book of aphorisms. Translated from the Spanish by Gonzalo Melchor. The poem intertwines this with words from the speech of **Frederick Douglass** on July 5, 1852, “The Meaning of July 4th to the Negro ” delivered in Rochester, NY. https://masshumanities.org/files/programs/douglass/speech_complete.pdf

Adriana ippel Slutzky: p. 65 *How we are spared*. The *Seat of Forgetting and Remembering*, located near the bluff of the Lower Falls in Rochester, NY. was created in 2001. Although the poem was not inspired by this monument, it illustrates the last two poems perfectly. Photo is by author.

see an old car, all rounded sleekness,
its vibrant green as polished as new,
and see a two-toned orange and cream car slinking up
to pass it like an Irish flag waving in the bright sun.

The shiny chrome doesn't reflect the elegant arches,
colonnades, nor does it mirror the layers of what used
to be— glamorous night life with Latin rhythms,
tasteful façades of palaces, old-world culture...

Two glitzy shells of American-made sliding in the traffic—
Stop and go. And I start to pretend to pull out stops
of a giant organ: Stop the wars. Stop, don't shop. Stop in shock.
I want to see beauty glide in the street, where the best
of every culture sings an international anthem to celebrate
every act of grace. So, I say, I'm in Havana,

and refuse any rush of time. There's a shiny green car
reflecting shadows on its side door, a spidery pool
of light on the trunk. What do you want to see ?

Do you see the drivers in these polished, prized cars?
I invite them for coffee— you come too—

we have so much to talk about—



<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/robert-gniewek-ave-del-puerto-havana>

Porcelain Desire—

page 38

for Jennifer McCurdy, inspired by her “Vortex Vessel”

The vessel folds in silken swings
unfolds sails and wings—
more than dish, more than clay—

Vortex of flames whirling,
yet holding whatever settles
in the waiting emptiness—

(hushed tones of lush fine bone fingers,
spinning overtones,
shadows casting O’s like waves)—
what looks stilled,
instills a craving to fly—



Vortex Vessel by Jennifer McCurdy

Today, you frame a silver sky,
but whatever the weather,
as seasons revolve one
to the next, beginning, ending
only to begin again,
what remains, is your embrace
of hollowness.

Your body, a black outline,
emptied, waiting as it holds
the light and dark of a day
filling you without being
part of you—
an outside
breathing that cannot touch
your inner space.

I want to hold your crossed hands—
I want to know their story,
how they have become worn.
I want to believe in the possibility
of their patina polished
as if once, touched and loved,
touching and loving.
I want to believe that in spite of everything,
your hands stripped to gloss, are testimony
to what makes your head hang so heavy
in the emptiness
of your wracked arms—

and to that possibility
of touch and love.



photo of *Mélancolie*, Sculpture by Albert György found in Geneva in a small park on Quai du Mont Blanc.

Where Do You Go?

—after Edward Hopper

Where do you go when you go
to the movies? Here, the cut-off
screen won't tell you which film
the audience is watching. Maybe
you will fall in love with one of the
actors, gasp, laugh or cry because
the images feel real as real.
Where do you go if you don't like
the film? Or if it's not about the film,
but that you are on a date in this
opulent cave of a setting?

Don't sit down in those empty seats;
not yet. There's so much more to explore
in this painting. Besides, more seats wait
for you if you take the stairs beckoning
in sultry light, behind the velvet curtains.
First consider the usherette, the real star
of the painting. Where has she gone under those

page 40

three lights, chin propped in her hand?
Look at her in her military uniform
her blond hair matching the mottled yellows
on the wall, and that shadow dripping below
the triumvirate of lights, touching her shoulder.

Oh, of course we know she is Hopper's wife,
and their marital quarrels are no secret.
He criticizes her, and she gets back
at him writing cryptic comments on his sketches.
Things like *the doorway goes in like a tomb*.

Did he ask her to wear her sexiest shoes?
Or was that her idea? Is that all she's allowed
of the glamour and fame she imagines in her dreams?

If you sit in the comfort of one of these theatre seats,
illusion arranged around you, tell me,
where do you go?



New York Movie 1939 by Edward Hopper

the best, the best, the best, eugenically, the best *the*
scrub-off of the ill-fated. Best to start over. What's *best*
for everyone will — was — is never — clear. Whose interest *is*
being scribbled on the wall, yet pasted upside down, *yet*
posted in disorderly notes, as if to say all that is. *to*
be considered has not yet come? Just wait. It will *come*.



The Best is Yet to Come, by Lorette C. Luzajic (Canada) 2019

It's not easy being Goddess of love—
especially with no job
description. Did it ever occur to you
how *I* want to be loved? Look how real
I am, unlike those dream-dolls painted
by Titian and Rubens.

Actually, I was the one who suggested
the mirror—I *am* reflecting... about
all those gifts people offer up to me,
hoping it will make a difference
as they pursue their illusions of being loved.
As for what you see—you *know* that's not
my face. Makes it more interesting that
someone else beside that false reflection
is looking at me.

Go ahead. Get caught up in my unctuous curves,
the hint of wings in my back and buttocks,
my pearly skin that matches the satin drapes.
But offer me roses after you make love to me
like that husband who gave roses to his wife
for her birthday, even though she prefers wildflowers.
I'll be touched, and at first pretend to be pleased.

But here's the secret: select roses the way he did:
all different lengths. Then, look delighted when
I liberate them from a crammed vase, into a wide-mouthed
cupid-and-venus water pitcher. They'll lose
that store-bought look,

stretch to the light in abandon,
show off each curl of peachy-pink petal—

then whisper in a sultry voice
how you adore me over and over—
touching me just like the sunlight on the
petals
and I'll be free to leave this set up,
get out of this paint. All yours.



Rokeby Venus (also known as The Toilet of Venus, Venus at her Mirror, Venus and Cupid, or La Venus del Espejo) by Diego Velázquez

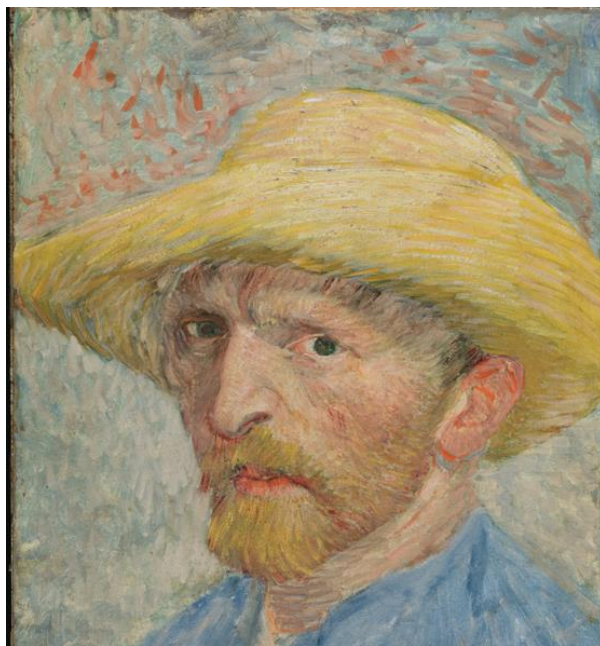
It's more than image of a face,
more than piercing, penetrating gaze—

the paint leaps in the background,
becomes flame and firefly on the skin,
livenes the sun in that yellow hat,
trumpeting in the key of *jaune*—
bright and close to jaunty.

Van Gogh and the paints know what they want:
vital aliveness caught in one moment,
like the noises of horses in the street,
voices rising like smoke, polishing
presence into the silence of façades.

In the artist's brush, the paint will not cease its
entrechats,

—desire squeezed into each
color, shining, bright, glad—akin
to the sound of *glathr*⁸ rooted in joy.



Vincent

Van Gogh: Self Portrait with Straw Hat 1887 (Detroit Institute of Arts)

⁸ etymology of “glad” related to Old Norse, *glathr* ‘bright, joyous’.

The letters *Postes*, embroidered on his cap,
echo the gold braid traveling like an errant fleur de lys
on his sleeves, refusing to stay in boundaries—
the outside definition of uniform;

the short strokes of gold around his face,
like a halo, small wings of it rising from his eyebrows,
flying from his hair by his ears and a cascade
of golden feathers in his beard—

How do you want to paint me today? Joseph asks,
plunking himself down in a chair,
one arm leaning on the green table.

He understands Vincent's need to paint more
than just the visible outside—
just like the letters he carries, what matters
lies folded inside the envelope, waiting
delivery, what is revealed in the light.

And so he sits. And so the other paints.
And we can imagine an ordinary man,
not bitter, nor happy, not perfect,
buttoned in his uniform, a friend.



Postman Joseph Roulin, 1888; Vincent Van Gogh

You were never really here
after Jeff Suszczynski

page 58

Call the funnel of smoke, *you*—
it brings in what you *were*
sucks out what *never*
was *really*
here...

The woman is like the outline of the moon soon to be *here*
wrapped in a fashionable robe—*really*
you might say, only a trick, *never*
more than faceless. If appearances *were*
defined by a dress called *you*—

does that change *you were never really here*—
that funnel of gray attaching *you*

to some greater grayness— *here?*
really never were you

belonging.



You were never really here by Jeff Suszczynski
<https://www.tinhornplanet.com/visual-art/collage>

He is only one of 164 celebrating with cups of *pulque*
on this fragment discovered deep underground.
And so, alone, as a singular celebrant,
imagine him drinking agave on top of Popocatepetl,
sharing his wide cup decorated with ancient Goddesses,
with Mayahuel herself, and the eleven serpents
writhing about her 400 breasts.

You can guess at his tongue
as he opens his mouth to drink—
or is he about to sing?

O night drinker, will you chant the story
of Gods hurling unfortunates into volcano fire... ?
I want to ask so many questions—

O night drinker, answering *vas a ver* —
ready to dance in syncopated
rhythms accelerating, *vas, vas, vas*
hand-clapping *a ver, a 'ver*
vas 'a 'ver,

 you hold the cup,
eyes so widely open as we watch.
Tell us what you see.



*fragment of a mural known as Los Bebedores
located on a lower level of the Plaza of Altars in Cholula, Mexico (dates to around 200 AD)*

My Friend Painted Angels

page 60

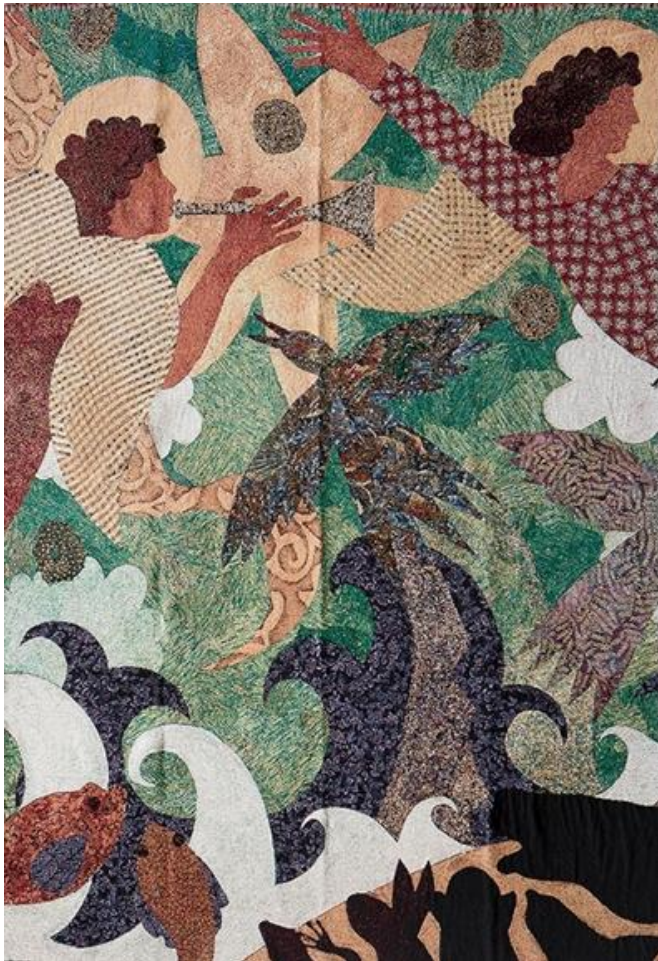
saying not only do they come in handy,
they abound—ready
when you are,
to remind you to join in the dance—

You do not have to believe me—
but I've seen it
over and over, when people despair,
tell you adversity will spread its prickly,
bitter jam
on a fragile crust of a moment,
its thick darkness breaking all hope, sticking
in your throat with the taste of misfortune.

Sometimes the littlest thing
will call out,

ask you to pay attention—something
unexpected—

no warning—
and an equally sturdy apparition spreads its
wings,
serves you nectar and ambrosia of the
ancient gods
infuses the air with radiance curling up,
like early morning mist,
to hold you in a host of aliveness.
No guarantees, predictions for this—just
a small twist in the way you start to step,
maybe hear the first bird at sunrise breaking
the silence of a long night.



Apparition by Lynne Feldman

remembering what passes along

or not

forgetting what's wrapped in lines

or not

another trigger pulled breath pinched

morning's return of the sun

or not

illuminating what bears no light of its own

or not

candles burning



Seat of Forgetting and Remembering by Adriana ippel Slutzky (Rochester, NY) (photo by Kitty Jospé)