

2023 Adult Winning Poems

Holding Fast

Spirits of the Ben'Zaa
inhabit every stitch criollo fingers
embroidered to honor Spanish viceroys.
Channeling ancestral formulas,
brown hands imbued Oaxacan marigolds
with pinches of pomegranate
to release rich yellows.
Ground red cochineal from clumped white insects
growing on nopal in Teotitlán de Valle.
Sweated hard days in Cerro de Añil
to distill indigo blue.
Indigenous colors have held fast,
connecting generations of Mexican artists.

- *Jean Hackett*

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Oh, What Tapestry Are We!

Stitched together like the wool, cotton, linen,
we see ourselves in the fiber. Without ripping
more than 250 years of patterned flowers,
two-headed eagles, it's impossible to unthread
what's been needled, to undo what's been dyed.
Instead, we must not look away from what draws
our eyes to the escutcheon, can make one question
the charges, images: two lances crossed, a man
coated in metal, blessed by an angel, a plated knee
bent before a crucifix, a bascinet removed
for prayer. But there's also a cluster of stars,
a rose, a tiger, a tree, keys to unlock the castle.
The longer we look, the more we find.
A coat of arms is meant to be seen.
So, too, us all—richly textured, unfinished.

- *Jonathan Fletcher*

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Shared Blood (A-94)

Together under every sky, through the heat and the rain
My brother, my blood, the same look in those eyes
I love you,
As deep as our color runs
The jewel in the center of our soul shines
Sends away the darkness
You're so strong where I can't be
Two parts of the same creation
I would break the earth for you
My heart beats heavy in your chest
When you hurt it hits me
When you try and hide, you drag me with you
And when my mind is out in some far, dark, jungle
Your mind knows where to find me
Shows me solid ground, shows me my roots

- *Diego Ray Hernandez*