



2024 EKPHRASTIC POETRY WINNERS – SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM OF ART

Artwork: *Yen Yen Vase with Landscape Decoration*

Adult Winning Poems (in no particular order)

Yen Yen Vase with Landscape Decoration

Standing alone in a room full of porcelain,
it offers one thing more than the cobalt leaves and flowers of the other pieces:
humans.

Not just splendid puffy trees reaching for heaven,
but houses snuggled between them.

On top, a mother and child
sit in a boat,
watching daddy fishing.

At the bottom, two men argue under umbrellas,
hands raised in gestures.

But the largest is around the back:
a fisherman in a boat.
The artist?

- Jeanette Burney

Life, This Vessel: After A Qing Dynasty Yen Yen Vase

You, bare it to the riverbed overwashed by winter runoff.
Move from the shadows of the great cottonwoods, move
into the light. Carefully, submerge it beneath the surface, hold
tight – feel the stinging cold, the mile-long ache that surged
through the canyons high above. Fill it until it overflows,
until it sloshes onto your feet. Then, drink deeply. *It's spring!*
Remember this. Because, looking skyward, imperceptibly
in the wavering distance – *beyond the mountain ridge, the blue sky* –
dark clouds swell, billow with leaden threatening. When you pay
attention, you notice subtlety lives in sunlight. And like the moon,
a different landscape takes place on the other side of the vase.
Days before my father's body yielded, before the vessel cracked,
he stopped speaking and never opened his eyes again. Craving
the beautiful truth, he refused to reveal what, for so long,
existed so far away.

-Mark Heinlein

Listen

Rushing water thundered across rocks
Pines stood like sentinels near bamboo homes.
Nature crowding tiny humans,
Almost drowned out the quiet conversations
“Listen,” said the seated monk, gray robe swirled around him on the mossy bank.
“The fish and rice are ready,” far away, a voice from a kitchen murmured.
“Thriving,” a father said, miles downstream. “The foliage falls so elegantly.”
“Good news,” his grown son replied.
“The willow tells us spring is here.”

-Elaine Lang

Youth Winning Poems (in no particular order; age 13 and older)

where the blue girl lies

blue girl, who made you so fragile?
your movements were once graceful but now are ephemeral.
blue girl, you were a chrysalis, shining iridescent.
dew drops reflected off your porcelain like the sun.
your skin, once colored with flesh is now gaunt and pale.
what eudaemonia existed in your gaze has now been replaced
with a silent curve on the side of your hip.
blue girl? let me lay my head on your side. let me rest between the
joint of your pelvis and soft, soft skin and let me read to you
the secrets of your world--
careful, do not shatter: you are precious. let me crawl inside
and make myself a home within your stomach -- do not breathe too heavily--
you will fragment easily.
blue girl – who really are you?

-Aarav Gedala

Timeless

Blue as bold as the twilight sky, white as pure as ivory
Calloused hands shaped you into being,
Masterful skill and experience, aged like fine wine.
Meticulous, winding brush strokes tell a lost story
Mountains strain to reach up and touch the sky,
The planet's elixir cascades between stone
Outlining dwellings of foliage, eternally frozen in season.
The breath of time coats your shell, undisturbed
Its grains a testament to the years spent among the living
Without ever holding onto a single life.
A treasure who once embraced nature's children
Their petals now rotted and decayed with the turning of centuries.
How have you watched this mortal coil atop your perch?
As the passing dynasties withered to dust. Leaving you behind.

-Allison Rauschuber