



2025 EKPHRASTIC POETRY WINNERS

THE BRISCOE WESTERN ART MUSEUM, Artwork: *Twilight Owl*, Edwoud de Groot

Adult Winning Poems

What I Worship, Above All Else, Flies

Out of a blue textured night
that belongs to you,
you burst through bright, fat drops of rain.
Wings unfolding, expanding,
until you're over four feet wide.
Forget the leopard. Forget the lion.
You are king. Maybe God.
Tufts of feathers for horns, regal face brown and white,
serious as talons that extend and rotate,
rip and sever. Through eyes the color of sun,
which widen in its absence, search
not just for tail or fin, antennae or wings.
Look also for me.
In your long shadow, I bow, I kneel,
to claws that grip, cries that pierce.

Jonathan Fletcher

The Ghost in the Twilight

Ten thousand souls have gathered. Each one burning more brightly
Illuminating the arrival of a wild wild thing.
Her wings silently cut through the darkness.
A mother, a priestess, a hunter
The patron saint of the abandoned
and of the forgotten.
She grew her golden feathers in spite of the rain.
She is the ghost in the twilight
She has returned to show us the way

Eric Lozano

Youth Winning Poems

Scars

She twists, trapped in the silence of her mind
A mind full of thoughts, memories

Some hers, some not

She writhes, stuck in her own skin
A skin that does not *feel* like it belongs

Half whole, half torn apart

Scars from the past and present
mar her body

mostly filled, slightly hollowed,

leaving little space
for what's yet to come—

More creeping vines of moments
More silent lines of flesh
and scars.

Thiyugee Marasinghe

A Cry At The Endless Night

Night, I fly through your dark waters.
Your waves wrapping me in your quiet darkness,
Attempting to drown me in your ocean of black.
Your abyss frightens me but also tempts me.

You try to make me one with the silence,
But I am not afraid.
My wings cut through your void,
My eyes pierce through your veil.

You may hold the world in slumber,
But I remain awake, searching,
Knowing that in your darkest depths
There is a glimmer of light.

Do not forget me, Night.
For though you are endless,
I am here – I am flying, I am calling, I am alive.

Rhyllie MacMillan

The Courageous Owl

I watch as its wings flap,
Calmly, but with strength,
Flapping, with no fear at all,
Just flying as it flaps its wings,
Nothing could stop it,
It's determined,
It left its fear back where it took off,
Ready to move forward,
Leaving everything behind,
Its face calm as the night sky,
Not a single sound nearby,
Not a single person either,
Alone.
Flying.

Lily May

Twilight Sojourn

A storm swirls
like grief
hiding hope
an owl will guide us home
its ancient wisdom will enlighten us
and lead us through the dark

Elizabeth Shi

McNAY ART MUSEUM, Artwork: *Hudson River Day Line*, Joan Mitchell

Adult Winning Poems

Specular Reflection

After Hudson River Day Line by Joan Mitchell

I know I shouldn't see
puddles at my feet
lost then found in the
river, but in the fleeting
street bridge when
on concrete supports
at Canyon Lake
waving hands disappear—
I dare to scream, but then
the waves. Relief.
I can

and

beauty in the prismatic
or the artifacts
depths of the San Antonio
dusk hour under Saint Mary's
diffused reflecting light ripples
or on the shores
when a man's
silence and stillness.
his head reappears in
Relief for what
can't change.

Kenneth Womack

White Space, 2025

a backwards glance at the blue and gold

I am having a hard time holding onto things

hilltops and houses, I mean taking time

to cook and to clean and engage in adoration
and savor and worship, to praise and to

wallow

without wanting. When I want to havoc

get paid, find an answer to cancer, take

an undefined number of afternoons to sit
in front of a painting of the sun coming up
over eastern hills, dividing the Hudson river
in blue and gold, and I apologize for not hearing exactly what you said just now

the antique engines grind and churn, hum

will we ever be happier than we are like this? What?

Brandon Forinash

Youth Winning Poems

Untitled

Rivers are my favorite.
I love rivers washing down on to my feet.
I like all kinds of things.
The end.

Wells Jessee

Where Dreams Go to Die

It's strange that such a place
Of orderly chaos
Could seem peaceful in the sun.

Despite harsh contrasts,
Dark and light,
Daydreams and nightmares.

As we wake for the race
Of life going by
Our dreams fade, one by one.

Despite this we stay on our tasks,
Ignoring the time slipping away,
The price we've paid for life.

Caroline Rickels

RUBY CITY, Artwork: *Living through strange times*, Wangechi Mutu

Adult Winning Poems

Living Through Strange Times

She emerges—stitched from fragments,
a body forged from ancient ghosts,
skin collaged from the echoes of history.

Her gaze is a question, unblinking,
a wound that refuses to close.
She bears the weight of strange times' breath,
the liminal space between rupture and rebirth.

Metal and bone, silk and shadow,
she walks on the edge of forgetting,
hybrid, holy, haunted.

What does it mean to be whole?
To survive the blade of becoming?
She does not answer—she moves,
her body, an artifact of the future.

Patricia Torres

Iansã

Malambo woman,
of the slithering green river.

Barnacle body
metallic, hot wheel red.

Head protrudes,
as prosperous cancer.

Lips glisten, slither,
clastic corporal sediment.

Mami Wata,
feminine seduction.

Materialism folklore.
Power,
wealth,
ruin.

Alejandra 'Mera Mera' Sánchez Alanís

Living in Strange Times

When strangers peck at my bird-like frailty, my periwinkle-hued carbuncles scabbed then split open by their misconceptions, my beauty resides in the mystery I discover deep within myself. Like heart-murmuring epics, cells of astonishment divide, multiply, and what I call my soul –intimate dreams, unutterable passions – unveils itself unctuously. It is a lighthouse, a beacon breaching the darkness, signaling sanctuary to vessels lost in the squalls of an unnavigable sea. I know you are lost; I too am lost. And too often fear is the shadow that accompanies us – afraid of the knock at the door, the before-dawn raid. Still, we are more than the constellation of wounds that bloom upon our skin – beauty is the mystery that resides within, is the light that nullifies the pitch-black headlines of the times. Still, don't forget the authority of our lips – luscious instruments used to whisper, to kiss, even dismiss flagpole tyranny. There's strength in saying simple statements like this: Our beauty resides within. It cannot be taken.

Mark Heinlein

Youth Winning Poems

Strange Things

The world spins endlessly
Yet the same roots dug deep

We perpetually evolve
Yet create our own frames

We are patchworks of quirks, shades of grey
Everything all at once

We are hybrids of nature and cities
With complex and tangled meaning

We wish for answers to come to light
Everything to fit in Black or White

We let our cultures clash,
Collide not blend with another

We are made of strange things
Yet we are all the same

Nikhita Nair

Losing Control

Oh, how we miss control

Living but not living
The machine takes its toll
My body crumpling and withering
As it rips apart my soul

My body feels empty
Riddled with holes
From trying to reach
Impossible goals.

We wanted to be Beautiful
To make ourselves whole
But instead we became twisted
Unable to be consoled.

Oh, how we miss control

Zachary Robinson

Bits and Pieces

It hurts
The way I crack
The way I ache
The way my parts snap into place

Oh it burns
The way I burst
My colors flowing
While my free found fingers
Are filed

I'm punctured by my twisting spines
Molded by hands that aren't mine
Merged with color of foreign piece

Now lonely frames set on a stage
Stuck on permanent display

Pearl Lyons

SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM OF ART, Artwork: *Man Playing Trumpet*, Marcus Leslie Singleton

Adult Winning Poems

One Blue Note

out of the darkness, one blue note curls
 Jim Crow shuffles his feet
one half-tone sings sorrow, sings hope
 twenty-five thousand march, no retreat
fifty-five years of scat and struggle
 front of the bus, a man gives up his seat
insistent blue note chanting our lives matter
 single white knee, Minneapolis street
two red waves, one long black shadow
 longer blue note still counting the beats
bans on science, on love — now DEI censors
 unyielding blue note now urgently whispers

blue note like smoke, still rising — still free.

Marla Dial Moore

Call & Response

His lips test the edge of a razored history,
cheekbones carved by a horn's curve.
Prying the dark *open* like a wound.

Flesh braids brass, an umber lacquer,
a silk thread *sprinting* through the valves.
His breath bruises quiet, raw-knuckled.

Weaving blows like a dizzy phantom,
as the room remembers itself.
The trumpet stains the air midnight,

pools on the floor, a *busted* inkwell.
Vines up the walls in navy strokes.
The club dissolving, a throat lozenge.

Choking sound like feather-down,
spitting out what won't be swallowed.

Naomi Wilson

Gonna Hear It Shine

What fights my darkness
cuts clean thru it
is the gleam of brass
the lamp of learning
and how I'm gonna blast
my way with a high c note
into the dazzle that lifts
this too small basket
off my over size light.
I will shine like the sun says,
beam my aurora of songs
and if my heart be true
I will sing my twinkle
as far as the stars.

Mark Kessinger

Youth Winning Poems

The Rhythm of the Streets

The busy streets of Brooklyn stop for no one
The horns honking, people begging, and puddles splashing
The tumultuous streets of Brooklyn stop for no one
The fire trucks speeding, people walking, and umbrellas opening
The cramped streets of Brooklyn stop for no one
The vibrations of the jack hammer, people's agitation, and droplets on your forehead
The quiet streets of Brooklyn make you stop
A melody dipped in gold comes from an underground jazz club
The homely streets of Brooklyn make you stop
A feeling of security washes over you as the soft tempo approaches
The abstract streets of Brooklyn make you stop
A harmonic slur hugs you as you dance on your own
The tiny, but mighty trumpet stops all of Brooklyn

Brijé Williams

The Tomb

Endless noise plagues the room devoid of any meaning.
The only comfort, a lonely wisp
a noise heard by only the wind.

There's nothing but harsh sounds that hit the inner walls,
walls covered in the fear of what might occur if heard.
The dread consumes what might bring joy,
reflecting who I inspire to be.

This fear holds me back in the darkness of my own tomb.

As my fingers glide meticulously,
the sounds are carried into the calm.
A need for liberation, for freedom, for release
a need to satisfy the dread overcoming me.

The wind is my aid, I feel the safety,
my grief is washed away
my music brilliant, the noise carried into the ears of my savior.

Greyson Rodriguez

THE WITTE MUSEUM, Artwork: *Salesman's Sample Horned Chair*, Charles Puppe

Adult Winning Poem

Fit for a King

Are you a testament to our voracious appetites fed by
the intrepid drovers guiding 3,000 head along the rugged trail to
market or the immigrant artisan on Commerce Street fashioning intricate
designs or the power of fads to make the absurd
irresistible or the hubris of man to believe he has tamed
the untameably majestic? I see the salesman wipe sweat from his
brow as he sips on the sweet tea the rancher's
wife graciously offered (it was a long trip after all) extolling the virtues of your
craftsmanship and promising a full-size model
to scale, delivered. But the rancher's small son climbs upon your smooth seat and
settles in contentedly, his arms crossed and face
placid; parents exchange glances.
"We'll take that one."

Charles G. Kels

Youth Winning Poems

Bovine Eulogy

Oh king of the range
Why are you here?
Reduced to the grange
No longer a steer.
Though once you did moo
Through all of those fields
Whose grass you did chew
Now all you'll yield
Is that short little seat
For all Texans with weary feet.

Maxwell Fisher

That Chair (from the manufacturer's perspective)

Who am I, if I can't sell this?
This chair – for which I killed much
I sacrificed so much!

Longhorns' carcasses strewn over the ground
Slaughterers and blacksmiths, equally tired
I said, I would pay them back
Now, I myself, am in debt.

Kids left me
Family hates me
Angels sing in my brain
And twist my thoughts.

This chair and so many like this
I look at them and see the face of death
Did I have to kill, to create?

Shloka Janhavi Subramanian

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