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WORDS ON CANVAS

WRITING COMPETITION



Art is a highly personal experience. It is also a collective one. The meaning of a painting, sculpture or photograph remains incomplete until it has been viewed, discussed or written about. By sharing what we see when we look, we learn more about art and about ourselves. *Words on Canvas* exists to facilitate this shared understanding. For the writer, it is a chance to imagine what may lie beyond the surface of a visual work. For you, the reader, it is an opportunity to inhabit another's perspective for a moment in looking at the same work of art.

We hope you enjoy this year's winning *Words on Canvas* entries. Feel free to take this booklet with you into the Harn's galleries and see what stories emerge and inspire you during your visit.

Thank you to our Judges.
Competition Judges:
Dr. Stephanie Smith, UF English Department
Dr. Jack Stenner, UF Art + Art History Department
Dr. Sidney Wade, UF English Department

Thank you to the UF Honors College for their generosity and support for this program.

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Table of Contents

Johnathan Miles	Higher Air	4
	Honorable Mention	
Ziqi Wang	The Patient Gardener	5
	Honorable Mention	
Christena Carollo	The patient gardener	6
	Honorable Mention	
Alyssa Towns	The Buoyancy of the Poet	8
	Third Place	
Karli Mogen	The patient gardener.	10
	Second Place	
Theodore Burrows	Orchid Pavilion Gathering	11
	First Place	

Johnathan Miles — English Literature at Santa Fe College
Honorable Mention

Higher Air

I tried to hang on the moving tree
to escape for a time, but I was weak then,
and fell back to the barren ground;
I stayed there for a life, and built a home
and raised my garden and was happy,
save for those memories of higher air
which took you and swung you about
in a manner of utter weightlessness

Inspired by

China

Boulder with the God of Longevity in a Landscape

Qing Dynasty (1644 - 1911), 18th-19th Century

Jade

Bequest of Dr. David A. Cofrin



Ziqi Wang—Biochemistry at UF
Honorable Mention

The Patient Gardener

As darkness falls the moths convene,
Tracing an invisible web of sweetness
In the air, the potent overture to nights
Like these.
A dun gray moon marks its corolla in the twilight.
A soft glow permeates the vista,
And murmurs escape from the earth—
A low, mellowing hum.
She stands, dignified and alone, ageless and
Abiding to Nature, gesturing to a humble abode—
Perhaps the last signpost of civilization
In this inflorescent reverie.
I take a step back, collecting my
Deluge of thoughts.
We do not consider clouds to be art,
But what of art without the clouds?

Inspired by

Maggie Taylor (American, b. 1961)

The patient gardener.

2007

Pigment inkjet print [Epson]

Gift of Jerry N. Uelsmann and Maggie Taylor

The patient gardener

Open your eyes, a voice whispers from the garden. And a girl, with eyes as black as poppy seeds that are shaped like small, perfectly balled pieces of dough, hears the whisper on the wind. She stirs beneath a blue quilt, her arms wrapped around the bare flesh of her torso. Her eyelashes flutter, opening to relieve curiosity. She lifts her head, followed by her neck, curling her spine upward until she is sitting. A ripple of goose bumps, left in the wake of a cool, damp breeze, washes over her skin. She puts her toes on the cold ground and lifts herself from her bed, unfurling her body in the dark. She slips out of her bedroom window, gently settling into the soft, dew-kissed grass and sprawling pea-green vines. She presses her stomach into the ground, stretching her arms and legs wide, imagining herself leaving the imprint of an angel amid the green and brown hues of her garden. She rolls, entwining her pale, slightly pink legs with the vines. They snake up her calves, kissing her cells, exciting her nerve-endings. She breathes in quickly while her pupils dilate, copying the girth of the full moon. The vines climb and slink toward her mouth, her eyes, the top of her dark brown brows. They move her farther out as if controlled by a lunar tide. They wrap around her, hugging her, and then they slowly stand her up as if offering her to the stars. She peers through the leaves that cling to her face with a single eye. She opens her body, lifting her arms up, and imagines little blue butterflies whispering to her, sharing soft secrets and gentle promises.



Inspired by

Maggie Taylor (American, b. 1961)

The patient gardener.

2007

Pigment inkjet print [Epson]

Gift of Jerry N. Uelsmann and Maggie Taylor

Maggie Taylor
The patient gardener.

Alyssa Towns— Biology at UF
Third Place

The Buoyancy of the Poet

Waiting for a cup to bob by like a duckling
still unsure about her center of gravity,
the thought suddenly jars me—how do ducks float?

A cup (there's one) rocks over hilly ripples
in front of me and I miss it, imagining
a starling hatching like the bloom of a lily.

Focus, the crests of the waves whisper
as they fall into troughs. I sharpen myself.
I straighten my spine. A leaf lands in my lap.

I catch the next cup that rides by.
Like a dragon, it breathes down my throat,
and I sculpt a little curio out of words—

Oaks sprout leaves as involuntarily
as we grow hair. Perhaps autumn
is Mother, trimming unruly locks?

I feel lighter. This is probably how ducks
do it—they let loose their whimsical ideas
and the water, amused, supports them.

Inspired by

China

The Orchid Pavilion Gathering

15th-17th century

Ink on paper rubbing of stone sculpture mounted as a handscroll

Museum purchase, funds provided by the Kathleen M. Axline



China

The Orchid Pavilion Gathering

Karli Mogen — Drawing at UF
Second Place

The patient gardener.

Gentle wisps,
as fragile wings
flutter across,
and moonlight stings.

Vines entangle,
but I can't let go
of that for which
I have no control.

A brightness,
the likes of which
one should never see,
but the blue,
it calms me.

How can I tell what is me
from what is Rot?
Does it even really matter?
I question,
but I care not.

Inspired by

Maggie Taylor (American, b. 1961)

The patient gardener.

2007

Pigment inkjet print [Epson]

Gift of Jerry N. Uelsmann and Maggie Taylor

Theodore Burrows—English at UF
First Place

Orchid Pavilion Gathering

Riverwine,
elucidate my steel cage.
Let loose this tongue and
spring song
with ease of that shapeless steed
by which you came to me.

Whiteflour swans and violet-eyed orchids
tangle in Gaia's glass arm,
a dance of verse themselves incited.

Her daughter bridge atop we watched
those sailors work their way
to hands before the river's feet
could wash that red away.

Inspired by

China

The Orchid Pavilion Gathering

15th-17th century

Ink on paper rubbing of stone sculpture mounted as a handscroll
Museum purchase, funds provided by the Kathleen M. Axline
Acquisition Endowment