

Art & Poetry at the Albuquerque Museum

These poems were performed by Hakim Bellamy, Albuquerque's Poet Laureate, in conjunction with The Albuquerque Museum's 3rd Thursday program on January 17, 2013. Many of the poems were written expressly for this event, and they are based on different artworks in the *Common Ground: Art in New Mexico* exhibition.



HAKIM BELLAMY

As the inaugural Poet Laureate of Albuquerque, NM (2012-2014), Hakim Bellamy is a national and regional Poetry Slam Champion and holds three consecutive collegiate poetry slam titles at the University of New Mexico. His poetry has been published in Albuquerque inner-city buses and various anthologies. Bellamy was recognized as an honorable mention for the University of New Mexico Paul Bartlett Re Peace Prize for his work as a community organizer and journalist, and was recently bestowed the populist honor of "Best Poet" by *Local iQ* ("Smart List" 2010,

2011 & 2012) and *Alibi* ("Best of Burque" 2010, 2011 & 2012). He is the co-creator of the multimedia Hip Hop theater production *Urban Verbs: Hip-Hop Conservatory & Theater* that has been staged throughout the country. He facilitates youth writing workshops for schools and community organizations in New Mexico and beyond. Hakim is currently finishing his MA in Communications and Journalism Department at the University of New Mexico. He is the proud father of a 5-year-old miracle and is the founding president of Beyond Poetry LLC.

Cuba, NM

At not a day over 7
maybe 8
she stood in between the double doors
on display

"Rest Stop"
wrong phrase to use
'cause she was definitely working
the absent smile was proof

not selling herself
but rather entire generations
picked, pushed, promised
then pulverized
into precious gems

worth more when rare
this was her culture
and as she has learned thus far
it is the one thing she can sell
better than them
the soul she can sell faster
than they sold theirs

one thing that they cannot take
only buy

no telling how long
she'd been standing there
before she unreturned my smile
barely pierced herself,
she hustles ear rings
that are not for ceremony
just tradition

holds them in arms that say "buy"
but stares at me with eyes that say "go away"
I could tell she'd been standing there
almost as long as we've been living here
from the burden of her gate

as she drug herself back
to mom's four door office
cell phone attached to ear
in lieu of product she doesn't sniff
just like a pimp

on minutes
baby girl hasn't worked
enough hours to prepay yet
but will

and I've seen us sell each other
in different forums
shrink rap ourselves
up into marketable art forms
but at least

for at least 7
maybe 8
hours on her feet
she put in an honest day's work to sell hers.



New Poem 1

Indian by Firelight by Joseph Henry Sharp

There is a fire
On the other side of the horizon

At which we stare our entire lives

Where dreams incubate
Before they ignite

In a yawn of light
That erases entire constellations
In the wink of an eye

Relocates them
To the dormitory of our brain

Where they masquerade ball
As a sky of neurons

Until the sunset
Sets them free

As Zia
Plays hide and seek with the horizon

We pocket
A piece of sol
To play kindling to our sleep

To play close
To the center of the solar system

And stare.

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Bert & Ernest (New Poem 2)

Nothing tests a friendship
Like a trip across country
You can smell the number of days between baths

Two people
And a busted wagon wheel

Turned Taos into a gallery of artists

Ernie was from Pittsburgh
Followed a trail of years and yankees
To the Southwest

He would not be the last nor'easter
To skip shore
And tangent into town

Waylay inland

Give up being a hurricane
For the trifle of a tornado

Give up the bumper to bumper of stagecoach
And whistle of cabbie
For hummmmm

"We ain't in longhorn anymore, Ernest"
says Bert

Ernest can't hear him over the acid
Over the water color of sky puddling into his heart
Over the sound of falling in love...
...with falling in love.

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Star Road and White Sun (New POEM 3)

By Ernest Blumenchein

Your first response
Was to pretend you didn't have it

But they could smell the gold on your breath
And mistook it for the hills

Buried it so deep inside
You forgot how valuable you were

Elders flanked in karats
Fail at reminding you

And peyote fails at helping you forget
There is light in your eclipse

That cannot be darkened
That cannot be killed

But it can be silent
It can be hidden.

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Legend (New Poem 4)

*Acoma Legend by Mary Greene
Blumenchein*

Made a legend
At a time when women
Weren't acknowledged to make art
Much less a living

And it shows
In homemade illustrations
A homemaker couldn't fake

Painted struggle
Out of experience and truth

Where cartoon imitates life
And art...?

Where corn is exquisite
Detailed
Kernel by kernel

Where him, not
More archetype than authentic
More caricature than complex
And her,
Same

A north wind of kiva
And creativity out the window

Versus

A floor full of harvest uncooked

Because of two hands
Full of brushes
And one life
Full of canvas

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Georgia's Blues (New Poem 5)

*Gray Cross With Blue
by Georgia O'Keeffe*

In New Mexico
There is nothing alien
About seeing folks, on a daily basis
Statue-like on sidewalks
Staring at the sky

Most times
They are looking for
Reds and oranges
But you, Georgia
You found the blues

You found the intersection of high
And heaven
And marked it holy sh.....

People still cuss
at your profane brilliance

Lose their religion

And hurl obscenities at you like
"Who the hell,
Said you could put purple in the sky, Georgia!"

"Who the hell,
Do you think you are...?"

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Forty Moons

Forty years of Los Lobos

Sometime between
hairless chinny chin chins
and Michael J. Fox
there were adolescent wolves

who bottled teen spirit
'til it smelled like punk

teen wolves who said f#\$% basketball
I wanna play rock 'n roll

from a generation on "all fours"
who had no "Pa"s

except for the ones on their hind legs

instead
they look up
up to moons they sing songs to

serenade cycles
and worship full bodied water goddesses
with howls
that sound like dog whistles
up there

she's got their kind of ears
even after forty years
of living with audiences that hunt in packs

wolves love like musicians

count on life
in nights

instead of days

in pray and stages
instead of dates and cages

instead of calendars
wolves are collectors
of memories

half man
half god reincarnate

seated at the foot of every dreamcatcher
sueños' best friend

in hunt of something
in hunt of self

lobos
that women will run with
that men will lie down with
and wake up with belief

in the tradition of the Plains Indians
wolf means west

sometimes
born in east L.A.
water-mouthed by birth
warrior

by breed and by block.

© Hakim Bellamy December 23rd, 2012
@ City Winery NYC

Ruidosa, TX

They used to hold Mass
in three languages
in this town
300 people ago

before Candelaria
pirated our religion up river
back when Ruidosa
meant loud as the Rio Grande
when the border was
deaf, dumb and blind

back when the river
connected us for miles
instead of separating us by generations

tucked behind
the toothy smile
of the Chinati Mountains
this town sits
swallowed
in the valley of her gut

land that's been contested
since the Apaches and Jumanos
to today's cartels
on both sides of the border
and Congress
on both sides of the aisle

a town
that's been fought over
and fought for
now forgotten

75 miles
down the road
in Lajitas
tourists pay \$800 a night
to stay at a resort

a town first known
for electing
a beer drinking goat as its mayor

Ruidosa
now a town of only 19
is best known
for people electing
to leave

two businesses
and a church
all that is left
in a town known for
"getting by"
in so many ways

Ms. Celia Hill
the 82 year-old owner
of the La Junta General Store,
which neighbors the church,
has watched the adobe
evaporate for years

Mr. Blumberg
owns the other business in town
Ruidosa Cantina
for when both
the desert
and the Sacred Heart Mission Church
are drier than usual

a rancher as well
68 years-old Jim Blumberg
also owns
the only other lifestyle in town

a town where
cowboys and vaqueros
belly up to the bar together
like they piss in the same river
but nobody goes to church anymore

there is a temporary chapel
in the adobe building
adjacent the church
that has a roof,
unlike the Sacred Heart,
now sunbathing its altar

in a reminder
of the sacrifices
made to the sun god
each day
in this region

where Franciscans
built missions
to bring Christianity
to those crossing the border
at Presidio

where the Mexican government
established a penal colony
and assembled armed convicts
against the Comanches

where Pancho Villa
let the revolution rest,
regroup
and ride onto our blank canvas

resistance
like the graffiti
now adorning the well-worn walls of the
church
as sacrilegious and sacred as its namesake

they herd artists here now
right up the road in Marfa
towns can't afford to move
towns have to switch careers too
in order to survive

but I wouldn't call it a ghost town
not while the church
still has walls
pressed together like hands
crumbling
but still praying
like people

nah,
I wouldn't call it ghost town
not while it's still got soul.



Haiku/New Poem 6

*Albuquerque, where the desert doesn't
get in the way of your view (NM Dept.
of Tourism)*

Before the Flood (AKA Baptize Me)

Before taking a day off
And after dessert
God made Adam out of dust

Desert
So what does Albuquerque make me?

Other than one big irritated "I"
With a car so desperate to be washed
It would do things for money That would make a
crackhead blush

Once white car
Now clay read
With jokes fingered into her windows like

"Baptize me"
But only when rain finds these holy grounds sacred
enough to hold water
Otherwise Let us sweat

NEW POEM 7

Stick Figure Famine

*Herding by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith
(French Cree & Shoshone)*

God could not come up with this kind of creation
Alone

Every spilled bucket of paint
Turns into movement
Turns into making
Turns into made
Turns into mud

And back again
Dust to dust

Histories
That count on stick fingers

Are nothing more
Than a collision

Of lines
And colors

lines
And wind

lines
And livestock

lines
And nations

lines
And love

And nothing less

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Silent Sanctuary

The poet entered the sanctuary
as a cynic not a sinner
a seer
not a sayer
this time

this time
he was looking
for the word

this time
he needed inspiration
more than he needed
to be inspiring

and he was listening
for once
maybe twice

the poet entered the sanctuary
as a sentencer
but not like them
not a judge
but one who strings words
into rosaries
that protect us
from not talking to each other
that shackle us to communities
for life

the poet entered the sanctuary
stood in the doorway of silence
praying to be met with
music, mantra, melody
even magic

he was met with none
as he crossed the threshold
between craft and creation
as he has learned
on the street

that science ain't shit
without sanctity
that anyone can read the notes
it's how you play'em
anyone can write and read a word
it's how you lay'em
how you say'em
anyone can read a holy book
it's how you live it
people sleep under sheet music
all the time
and don't give a f#\$%
it's how you make love

the poet entered the sanctuary
to have his French pardoned
amongst other things
but was disappointed
because there would be more French

disappointed
that God's people
were worshipping with mouths closed

disappointed
that God's people
were worshipping with asses still

disappointed
that heavenly people
we're afraid to love one another
to touch one another
to dance

confused
that they could read
a whole book
and have nothing to say
that they could read
an entire hymnal
and have nothing to sing
nothing to dance

who could read
an entire volume
of divine poetry
and then pray in silence?

so the poet left the sanctuary
back to the curbside pulpit
where pain
and worship
both have to be louder than the traffic
where God is a superhero
and you only ever see her
when your life's in danger

and unlike the church folk
'cause of the nature of how he lives
he sees God everyday
doesn't even have to pray

but when he does
when they do
they have a novel on the tip of their tongues

and God like stories
a lot

but what the poet forgot
is that their poetry
comes from silence
not from sounds

and such poetry
if its good
leads back
to silence
again.

amen.

Nuclear Bird (New Poem 8)

*Atomic Thunderbird by Tony Price
"The Atomic Artist"*

There is a silence
Right after the intense flash of light

Quick as you
But a thousand times brighter

That comes before the heat
Before the radiation
Before the fireball
In mid air

You still fly there

Even after gravity
Has evacuated

The same way you longboarded
The calm before the storm
For generations

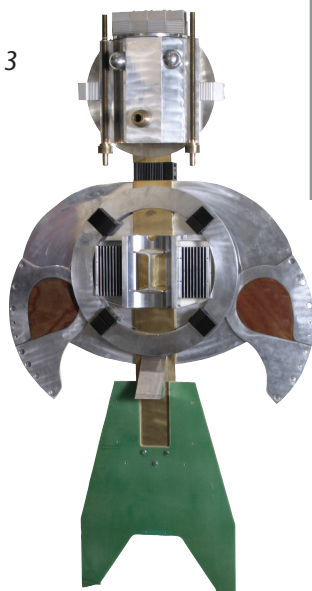
So gracefully
We confused harbinger
For bringer
And made folklore out of you

And just like the science you defy
With your wings full of thunder
your eyes full of lightning

You've taken to the human form
Braided yourself to our DNA
Fused our future to yours

In hopes
That we won't turn you
Into a weapon too.

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Still (New Poem 9)

*San Cristobal Valley Series #18 by
Robert M. Ellis*

It never gets old

The aisle seat
Legroom?
Yes.

But also the bruised shoulder
From the drink cart
Built for an airplane
Just a few centimeters wider

No one ever thinks about
The amount of legroom
A drink cart needs

Or this flotation device
That is about as comfortable
As a flotation device
That has been impersonating a seat
And is currently turning my back
Into a serious medical condition

Already in an upright position
Since takeoff
Because the recline function
Doesn't work on this thing

Right as we broke
10,000 feet
And the pilot's voice drifted
Into tuned out
Middle school teacher monotone

Poor manners became my wingman
As I forgot there were two people between me
And the view

Personal space hitched a parachute
20,000 feet ago

This seat was as comfortable as footie pajamas
Cuddled up to a window of wonder

Wonder if this is what the view from heaven
Looks like

Wonder
How this teradactyl stays afloat?
How come this never gets old?

\$500
Is a steal
For a few moments of reliving your childhood
For the ability to time travel
For the best seat in the house

So palatial
That my feet can't even touch the ground.

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