

Arc Poetry Annual 2011 Poet as art thief: a National Gallery Heist

A New Tool for Teaching Canadian Poetry

Free Copy of *Arc Poetry Annual 2011* for Canadian Teachers and Professors

Arc Poetry Magazine is delighted to launch *Arc Poetry Annual 2011*, and to invite you as a teacher or professor of Canadian Literature and/or Creative Writing to use *Arc Poetry Annual 2011* as a didactic tool in the classroom. To that end, *Arc* can provide teachers of Canadian poetry with a **complimentary sample copy** of the print magazine and deep discounts on class sets of the 2011 *Arc Poetry Annual*. Please contact us for details at arc@arcpoetry.ca.

An Introduction to *Arc Poetry Annual 2011*

Arc Poetry Annual 2011 is more than a collection of poetry—it's a collectible. This year, Arc celebrates ekphrasis—the representation of visual art within a literary work, and vice-versa. Through a diverse series of poetry, art, essays and interviews, Canadian artists render a feast for the senses as they meditate on the place of art in poetry.

This year, Arc took the unprecedented step of commissioning prominent contemporary Canadian artists to create new works of art based on Canadian poems. The resulting collection is a stunning and unparalleled collaboration that erases the boundary between poet and artist, and between the visual and the written word.

The *Annual* includes work by renowned Canadian poets Stephanie Bolster, Ross Leckie and John Barton, as well as rising stars in Canada's poetry scene, including Sandra Ridley, Aislinn Hunter and Nick Thran. The collection also boasts literary-inspired works by internationally renowned artist Pascal Grandmaison and the award-winning duo Duke and Battersby, as well as a triptych of poetry and art works by rising superstars Shary Boyle and Emily Vey Duke (of Duke and Battersby).

Highlights of the 2011 Annual include:

- New poems by award winning poets Stephanie Bolster, winner of the Governor-General's award for poetry (1998); Anne Simpson, winner of the Griffin Poetry Prize (2004); CBC Literary Award winners John Barton and Jan Conn; Governor General poetry award finalists Ruth Roach and Barry Dempster and many more!
- Essays, interviews and conversations with prominent writers and artists, including David Franklin, former chief curator of the National Gallery of Canada.

- Acts of sedition: Visual artists turned poets are spotlighted in works by award-winning artist Serge Murphy and Emily Vey Duke.
- Articulating the Collection: Poetic works inspired by National Gallery gems from artists Emily Carr and Betty Goodwin.
- Through the Ages: Poetry inspired by artists as diverse as Caravaggio, Edward Hopper, Gustav Klimt, Paul Klee and more!
- An innovative approach: The unraveling of a poetry-art chain by 12 Ottawa artists and poets.

For more information on the lesson plans, or on how to get copies of the magazine for your classroom, please contact:

Pauline Conley, Managing Editor
Arc Poetry Magazine
P.O. Box 81060
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1B1
arc@arcpoetry.ca
www.ArcPoetry.ca



Arc Poetry Annual 2011

Lesson Plans: Ekphrasis—Ideas, Images and Interplay

Pascal Grandmaison, *Refllet 2*

This original work was created in response to the poetry of Serge Murphy, from the collection *La vie quotidienne est éternelle* (Éditions de l'Hexagone, 2010). An excerpt is included in *Arc Poetry Annual 2011*, in its original French and in English translation by Valerie Howes.

Objective

Students gain an appreciation for several avenues poets can take when addressing works of visual or plastic art (e.g. description, interpretation, conversation, competition). The readings ask them to consider both the common ground between art and poetry (e.g. ideas, images, appeals to the senses, symbols and other figurative representations) and the particular strengths of each medium.

Advanced Objective

Discussions of the meaning-making options available to artists and poets encourages students to reflect on the composition of both poems and works of art and incorporate their observations in their analyses.

Definitions

Read the beginning paragraphs of Ruth Roach Pierson's essay (page 140 to 142). Pierson's essay raises the issue of how to define ekphrasis, each of which may be true for a specific ekphrastic poem.



Interplay Images and Imagination

“Images” are Common to both
(Visual/Plastic) Art and Poetry

Andrea Stokes, *Cabbagehead*

This original work was created for *Arc Poetry Annual 2011* as part of a chain of 12 Ottawa poets and artists.

- A. In the study of poetry, the words *image* and *imagery* refer to the use of language to appeal to the senses, either by literal description or by figurative reference. Images appeal to any of the senses, not just sight.
- The ability to create images depends on *imagination*—the ability to generate images not directly felt by the senses.
 - Poetry and art simply use different tools to do the work of imagination.
 - Ekphrastic poetry changes the tools from lines and colours etc. to language. It also makes the work of something that must be imagined because, for the reader of the poem, the work of art is not directly present for the senses.
 - In poetry, language mediates between direct perception by the senses and the experience imagined.
 - Art *generally* appeals directly to sight, and it may also appeal to the other senses via the characteristics of the medium, such as cool metal or smooth soapstone. You see the image or images.
 - Sometimes those images are *mimetic*—that is, they try to look like real things.
 - Sometimes the images are abstract. They “withdraw” from representing concrete things, or they present ideas separate from concrete examples.
 - In this way, art can represent subjects like emotions more directly than through, for example, representing an emotional face.
 - Both poetry and art draw on metaphor and symbol to capture experiences and create meaning.
 - Language is full of dead metaphors that might become useful visual symbols for artists. Colours like blue (sad) or red (angry) are commonly associated with emotions and the connection is recorded in terms like “The Blues” and sayings like “That made me see red!” There are many other examples.
 - These associations are about fairly basic experiences like colours and simple binaries, such as light/dark, up/down, high/low, day/night, open/closed, spacious/crowded. They are a shared resource for both poets and artists when creating images, and they’re a simple example of how both poetry and art represent complex human experiences.

- iii. These common resources are essential to ekphrasis. They link the two ways of making meaning at a very basic level.
- g. Look at the cover of *Arc Poetry Annual 2011—Bent Passage* by Betty Goodwin.
 - i. What does this work represent, either concretely or abstractly?
 - ii. What aspects of the image are important to your response? (You might ask whether the “passage” looks narrow or confining, or dark and dense).
- h. When a poem takes a work of art as its core image, it really takes both the work of art and the artist’s subject as experienced through work.
 - i. This gives the poet possible relationships with the poem. The poet can *describe* the work of art, *interpret* the work of art, *converse* with the work of art about its subject, and even *compete* with the work of art and try to outdo it in some way.
- i. Look at Emily Carr’s “Graveyard Entrance, Campbell River” (page 38). Now cover that side of the page and read Harry Thurston’s poem “Graveyard Entrance, Campbell River” (page 39 to 40).
 - i. How well does Thurston convey Carr’s painting?
 - ii. Are his descriptions accurate?
 - iii. He calls Carr’s image “A little dark painting about death.” Does this help you “visualize” Carr’s image when you read it?
 - iv. Look at Carr’s painting again. Does it have more meaning for you now than when you first looked at it?
- j. Now look at Jessie Oonark’s “Inuit riding on the boats” (page 36), then read Anna Kisby’s poem of the same name (page 37).
 - i. Do Oonark’s descriptions work the same way Thurston’s did?
 - ii. Some of her images are metaphors. What does this do to your perception of the painting?
 - iii. Does Kisby’s poem contain meanings that aren’t in Oonark’s image? (Most significantly, the “egg” imagery of the Inuit being “born” out of the avatak. Secondly, the mixing of vegetable and animal metaphors (leaf, blood, egg, chlorophyll).
 - 1. The poem records two things: Oonark’s image and Kisby’s perception of or reaction to Oonark’s image.

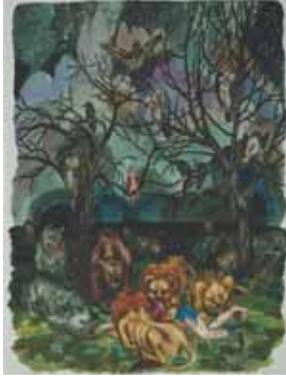


Interpretation and Conversation

Abi Lyon Wicke, *Before the Havoc of Angels*

This original work was created for *Arc Poetry Annual 2011* as part of a chain of 12 Ottawa poets and artists.

- A. Revisit *Bent Passage* and the other graphite drawings by Betty Goodwin on pages 28 and 30 (*Open Passage; Closed Passage*). They're all called "passages." Do you see them as representations of some concrete thing (e.g. air ducts)?
- B. How would you describe these works to someone who's never seen them?
- C. Read Anne Simpson's "Flood" (page 29).
 - a. What is the relationship between Simpson's poem and Goodwin's drawing? Where does Simpson get the woman and the trees?
 - i. Simpson's imagination interprets or riffs on Goodwin's image. Her interpretation seems based on what the lines and shades within the basic shape suggest more than the whole shape itself.
 - b. Consider Simpson's comments in the interview with Aislinn Hunter (page 44 to 53) where she describes ekphrasis as a "conversation." What does it mean to describe the relationship as a conversation?
 - i. "...one thing doesn't colonize the other" (page 53).
 - ii. Do Simpson's poems affect the way you see Goodwin's images in the same way that Kisby or Thurston affect the way you see Oonark or Carr?
 1. Simpson's poems establish their own position based on the image and elements of its composition, rather than overlay an interpretation on Goodwin.



Links in the Chain: Perspective, Conversation, Competition Across Media

Shary Boyle, *I Want to be Afraid of Nature*

This work is excerpted from a book-length collaboration of poetry and artworks by Emily Vey Duke and Shary Boyle.

The Chain of poems and art (page 82 to 98) tracks the way ideas become images. Each link in the chain sparks new ideas in the succeeding poet or artist. As a side-effect, it shows the relative capacity for poetry and art to move between the concrete and the surreal. Look at Maria Lezon’s *Luna* (page 87). What do you see in this image? Is it representative, abstract or both?

- A. Read Max Middle’s “H, an orange fish”, which takes *Luna* as its starting point.
 - a. Is Middle’s poem easier to understand than Lezon’s image or less accessible? Why?
 - i. Is it easier to put aside “getting it” (meaning) with a work of art? Do you have higher expectations for poetry to mean something? Why?
 - ii. We understand the rules of how to make meaning in language. Breaking those rules can make us feel “lost” the same way an abstract image can when it doesn’t represent something we recognize.
 - b. One part of Lezon’s work is a recognizable moon, but the sequencing allows Middle to put the interpretive reading of Lezon’s image into his poem before Andrea Stokes fixes the final shift in her *Cabbagehead* (page 90).
 - c. Look at *Cabbagehead*. Does this work of art stand alone for you? Why or why not?
- B. Look at Abi Lyon Wicke’s *Before the Havoc of Angels* (page 92).
 - a. What do you see in this image?
 - i. Certain parts are recognizable—feathers, the outline of a house.
 - ii. How would you describe the whole to someone who hasn’t seen it? What would you emphasize and why?
 - b. Now go back to Sandra Ridley’s poem “Last Supper” (page 91).
 - i. “Last Supper” links *Cabbagehead* and *Before the Havoc of Angels*.
 - ii. Are there ideas/elements common to all three?

Close

You can see the art that inspired Maureen Hyne’s “After Rising” (page 134) and Kelley Aitkin’s “Lamentation for Ernst Barlach, 1938” by searching online. Read the poems and visualize the

works of art they suggest, then find the images. Compare the image you had in your head, and ask yourself what relationship the poet sought to cultivate with the work of art and why.