

In commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Contemporary American Authors Lecture Series (CAALS), various Michigan artists were invited to explore the themes of the nationally renowned authors who presented public lectures at CAALS. The fruit of their efforts is on display within Marygrove's Beyond Words Gallery. The special exhibit runs until May 17th, 2013 and travels to Madonna University (Livonia), the IHM Sisters Motherhouse (Monroe) and the Virgil H. Carr Center (Detroit) soon after.

Here are statements from the authors, explaining the inspiration behind their work.



"Paper Surveillance"

Artist: Erin Marie McDonald

Author: Gloria Naylor 1989

Media: Vellum, Thread & Ink

Statement: "Gloria Naylor's fictionalized memoir, 1996, tells of a hellacious year of covert surveillance against Naylor conducted by the federal government. Seventeen years later in 2013, I performed a fictionalized digital surveillance on Naylor's memoirs from 1996. The ubiquitous access of technology makes the private individual life available to the broader public."



"Breathing Water Dreaming Air"

Artist: John Zawadski

Author: Mary Helen Washington 1990

Statement: According to the New York Times Book Review, "Mary Helen Washington has had a greater impact upon the formation of the canon of Afro-American literature than has any other scholar. In her short story collection *Black Eyed Susans*, Washington combines two critically acclaimed short story collections (for a total of 20 stories) published after 1960 featuring the work of today's most celebrated black women writers."



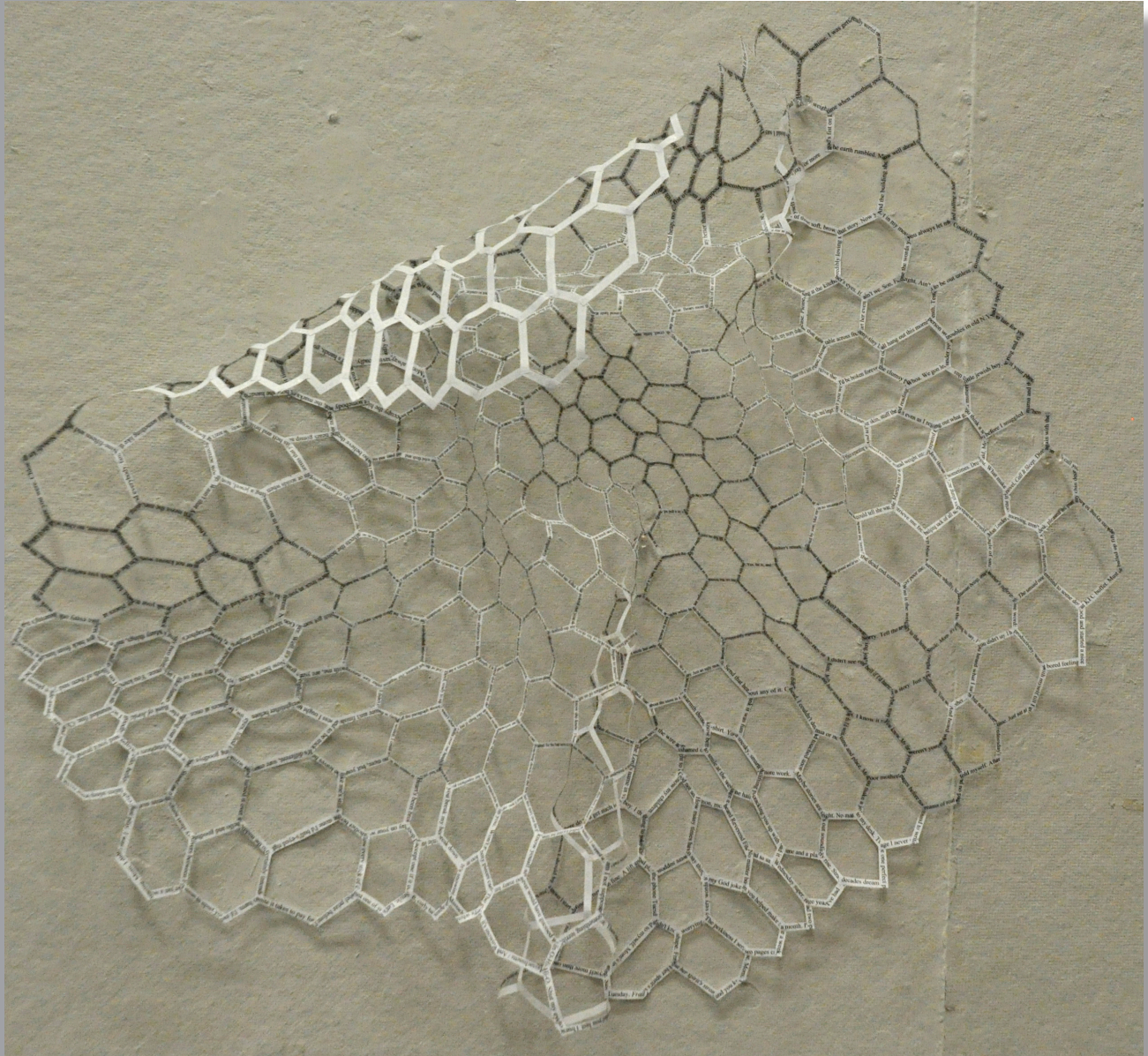
"Triangular"

Artist: Jim Lutomski

Author: Paule Marshall 1991

Media: Mixed Media

Statement: "The triangular that she refers to in *Triangular Road* is based on three points of reference: Brooklyn, Barbados, and Africa. This book is triangular in nature and it contains biographical material, reviews, quotes, maps, and modified postcards. I wanted the book to purposefully resemble a scrapbook and because Paule is still with us, the book is unfinished."



"Waiting"

Artist: John Corbin

Author: John Edgar Wideman 1992

Media: Paper and Adhesive

Statement: "My mother used to say she was just resting her eyes, not taking a nap. Now I know she was relaxing her muscles after lifting 'burdens' all day long. John Edgar Wideman opened my eyes in more ways than just that one with his short story 'Weight.' I am lighter for having read it. Wideman is masterful at bringing words together, arranging them and giving them meaning. My intervention with his text was to return those same words to their weightless state."



"Ground Under My Feet"

Artist: Karen Sanders

Author: Sherley Anne Williams 1993

Media: Photography

Statement: "Sherley Anne Williams often explored the memories of her childhood as a farmhand with her parents and incorporated them into her work. This piece is in reflection and appreciation of the poems that relate to her early life with her family and the work they did in the fields. I share her desire to make connections between some of what has gone before, what is going on now, and what may come later."



"Untitled"

Artist: Tylonn Sawyer

Author: Octavia Butler 1994

Media: Oil on Canvas

Statement: "Octavia Butler's characters exist in highly original, fantastic and wondrous worlds with supernatural/otherworldly beings. I wanted to show a being that, while resembling a human, clearly was an 'other.' Within this work, I hope to evoke a sense of warm sentiment and sinister. Human and alien. Innocent, yet knowing."



"Write to Save Your Life"

Artist: Jen Boyak

Author: Jamaica Kincaid 1995

Media: Mixed

Statement: "I wanted to represent Jamaica Kincaid in different stages of her life from past to present. It was important to make a connection to her home country of Antigua while also representing her new homes, both in New York (where she initially emigrated at the age of 17) and the Northeast where she currently resides."



"Primer for the Nuclear Age"

Artist: Tim Gralewski

Author: Rita Dove 1996

Media: Graphics

Statement: "The poem I chose as inspiration for my piece is 'Primer for the Nuclear Age' by Rita Dove. I was drawn to the poem by its timelessness and relevance to today's world. The poem gives a cautionary warning on the state of existence. In creating my piece, I tried to visually convey the feeling and emotion I got from reading the poem and the sense of trying to be a compassionate and loving human in the face of a destructive, tumultuous age."



"Untitled"

Artist: Alaina Plowdrey

Author: Virginia Hamilton 1997

Media: Watercolor

Statement: "I choose to represent Virginia Hamilton in a portrait with the titles of her books cozily around her as a child would maybe have their books scattered around him or her. I also choose this composition to showcase how many published works she has with her beautiful face as centerpiece. I was instantly overcome with the amount of work the woman has published as well as the world she creates in each of her works."



"Tattoo"

Artist: Christine Hagedorn

Author: Ernest J. Gaines 1998

Media: Handmade paper and ink

Statement: "While operating within the harsh societal norms of the 1930s south, two men in Ernest J. Gaines's *A Lesson Before Dying*, participate in a dialogue that will transform them both and impact those who bear witness. Although it was impossible to capture the subtlety and torment of the times and the circumstance, I heated the handmade paper until it burned and left a scar or tattoo that could never be removed."

i am accused of tending to the past

as if i made it
as if i sculpted it
with my own hands. i did not.
this past was waiting for me
when i came.

HEARTFELT

a monstrous unnamed baby.
and i with my mother's itch
took it to breast
and named it
History.

FRANK BLUE

she is more human now.
learning language everyday,
remembering faces, names and dates.
when she is strong enough to travel
on her own, beware, she will.

Lucille Clifton

STRAIGHT FORWARD GREEN

"Heartfelt," "Frank Blue," and "Straight Forward Green"

Artist: Rose E. DeSloover

Author: Lucille Clifton 1999

Media: Housepaint, Vinyl Lettering

Statement: "I selected her poem, 'i am accused of tending to the past' from her collection *Quilting: Poems 1987-1990* and incorporated it into a color portrait. The three colors chosen for the background field of each stanza were picked because they reflect and emphasize qualities in her writing: Heartfelt, Frank Blue, and Straight Forward Green."



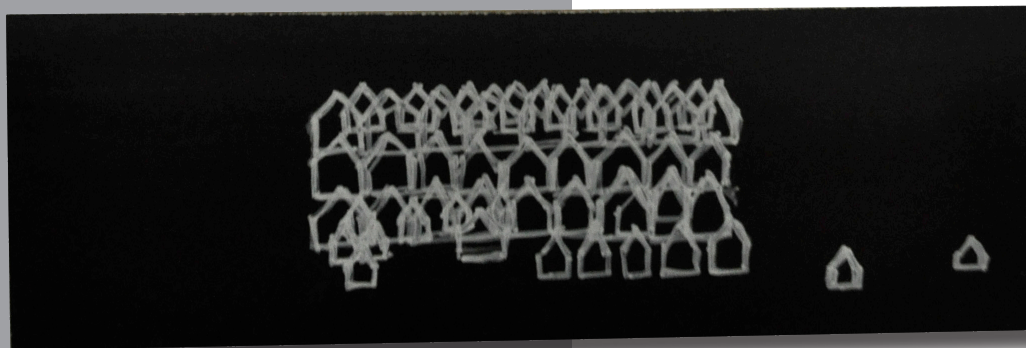
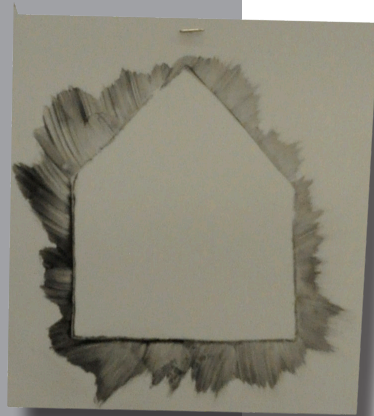
"Calalo"

Artist: Sue Carman-Vian

Author: Merle Collins 2000

Media: Goache

Statement: "Merle's belief is that women preserve the social community, and like her I have found that my art has flourished with the help and recognition of many artists, especially many women artists who have taken me under their wing. I am from Detroit with its diverse mixture of racial and ethnic backgrounds, she is from Grenada with its mixture of racial and European backgrounds. Both of us use ideas and influences from these surroundings to inspire our work."



"The Divided"

Artist: Rachel Reynolds

Author: Toi Derricotte 2001

Media: Mixed Media

Statement: "This was created in response to Toi Derricotte's honest and earnest memoir, *The Black Notebooks, An Interior Journey*. This book is about the search for a home, a safe home for all our complexities, our beauty, and our abhorred life. It is about not finding that home in the world, and having to invent that home in language. (pg. 19)"



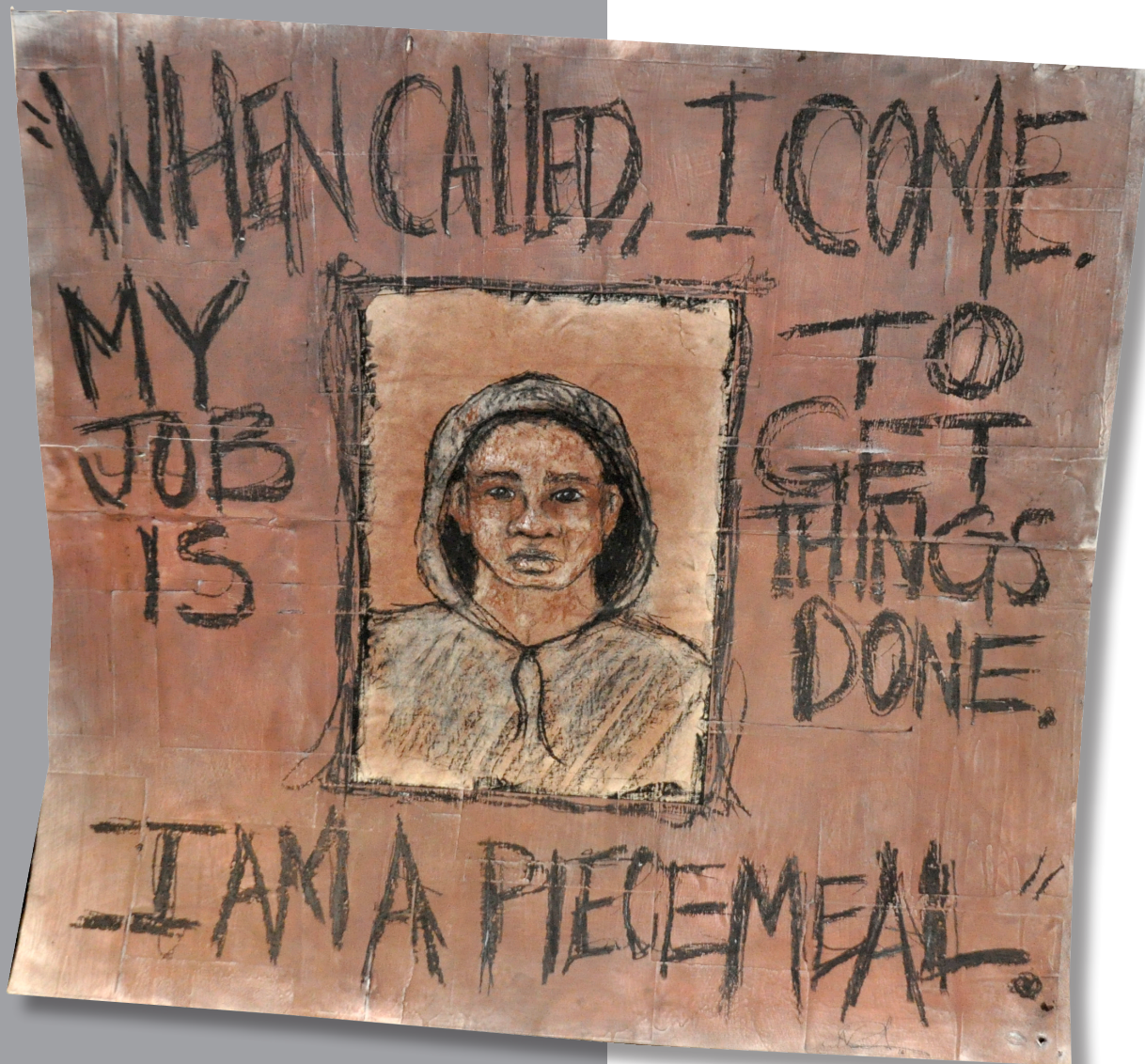
"Remembering: Breath, Eyes"

Artist: Mary Lou Greene

Author: Edwidge Danticat 2002

Media: Alternative Photographic Processes

Statement: "The feeling of fate and attachment to the past is poetic in itself, but combined with her lyrical language and powerful imagery, Danticat's work is palpable to the point of almost becoming a visual experience. This piece is a remembrance of thoughts I experienced as I read *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, memories that are tied to my own upbringing."



"Untitledd"

Artist: Alice Victoria Schneider

Author: Cornelius Eady 2003

Media:

Statement: "I was drawn to Cornelius Eady's works right away... I especially related to his work of poems called Brutal Imagination. There is a poem titled How I Got Born. That spoke to me, in particular the words "When called. I come. My job is to get things done. I am a piecemeal. I make my living by taking things." Although our vantage points are not the same, his poems communicate to me on a level of mutual understandings."



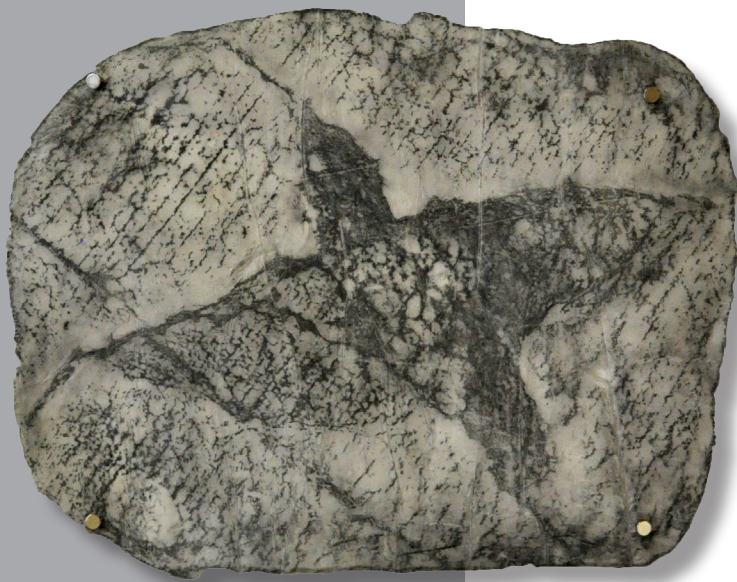
"Pearl Cleage"

Artist: Christopher Batten

Author: Pearl Cleage 2004

Media: Acrylic on Canvas

Statement: "My piece, simply entitled 'Pearl Cleage,' aims to highlight some of the accomplishments of Pearl's illustrious career and key the viewer into the elements that helped shape her. The symbols floating around her portrait (Apple Blossom, Shrine of the Black Madonna logo, and the Cherokee rose) are meant to key the viewer in to elements of her past (and present home of Georgia) that helped to shape her into a great author/playwright."



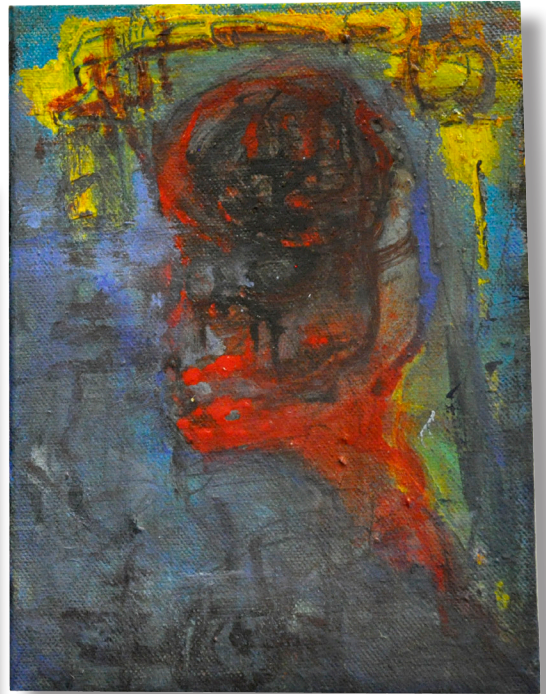
"The Girl Who Raised Pigeons"

Artist: Kathy Rashid

Author: Edward P. Jones 2005

Media: Clay, Charcoal, and Tracing Paper

Statement: "Edward P. Jones's short story, 'The Girl Who Raised Pigeons,' is a stunning portrayal of a motherless girl's experience of loss and abandonment in Washington D.C.'s urban core in the early 1960s. As social and political forces beyond her scope bring on her community's gradual desertion and dissolution, even the pigeons she strives to keep for her own, ultimately forsake her to a crumbling city. Musing on its emotional impact, while walking along Detroit's sidewalks, I came upon an intersection of cracks in the cement which brought together the birds, the girl, the city and my own experience of loss, growing up in Detroit during its historical exodus, due to those same overwhelming forces of greed and racism. I pressed a soft clay slab into its surface, taking an impression which resulted in this image."



"Untitled"

Artist: Vito Valdez

Author: Charles Johnson 2006

Media: Oil on Canvas

Statement: "The paintings are inspired within the collective consciousness of the 60's Afro-American movement and its evolution and history. I refer to Mr. Johnson and form this from his critical essay: A man of color caught in the crossfire of the hypnotic exotic skin intoxication as I have experienced."



"Untitled"

Artist: Asia Hamilton

Author: Marilyn Nelson 2007

Media: Acrylic on Color Photograph (C-Print)

Statement: I chose Marilyn Nelson's poem "Cover Photography" because it related so much to what my work stands for. My work is a celebration of the body, my body. My art deals with the human experience - Relationships, body-image, love, loss and insecurity. I started doing nudes to become more comfortable with myself. To appreciate every lump, bump, curve and line...To generate self love and self acceptance. My goal is to remove the stigmas of the naked body and view everyone as human and beautiful. In the poem Marilyn says, "I wants to be remembered...". She expresses a pride and power in who she is and the essence of strength she breathes through an observation of her body and soul. My work's sentiments exactly.



"d1 3r3nt"

Artist: Mantrell Goodrum

Author: Samuel Delany 2008

Media: Digital Photographic Construction

Statement: "The image is meant to be both a likeness of the character Lo Lobey as well as a statement regarding generational struggles with nonconformity, ethnicity and sexuality. I photographed myself for this project in order to experience first-hand ideals of exposure, judgment and worry about being seen as different as the term relates to Samuel R. Delaney's textual connotations."



"Praise"

Artist: Lisa Luevanos

Author: Elizabeth Alexander 2009

Media: Acrylic Paint on Canvas

Statement: "This piece is dedicated to Elizabeth Alexander's poem 'Praise Song for the Day' which was composed for and read at Barack Obama's Presidential Inauguration in 2008. The glass represents light and hands represent courage and hope, dedicated to those who fight the struggle and hope for a better tomorrow for all."



"Blind Faith"

Artist: Taurus Burns

Author: Walter Mosley 2010

Media: Oil Paint on Canvas

Statement: "This piece was inspired by *Blonde Faith*, by Walter Mosley. Faith Laneer is a young, beautiful, dangerous woman whom Easy Rawlins is led to during a murder investigation. Drawn together by danger, they begin to fall in love... when tragedy strikes again."



"Winding, wound. Wounded wind."

Artist: Sally Schluter Tardella

Author: Harryette Mullen 2011

Media: Color pencil, gouache, ink and torn paper on paper

Statement: "Using color and marks, I respond intuitively to the language of Harryette Mullen's poem. The words are so very visual, becoming the catalyst for this image. In this drawing, I am Eurydice, waiting for music. I am in a spinning gyre, at the very portal between life and death, awaiting my fate."



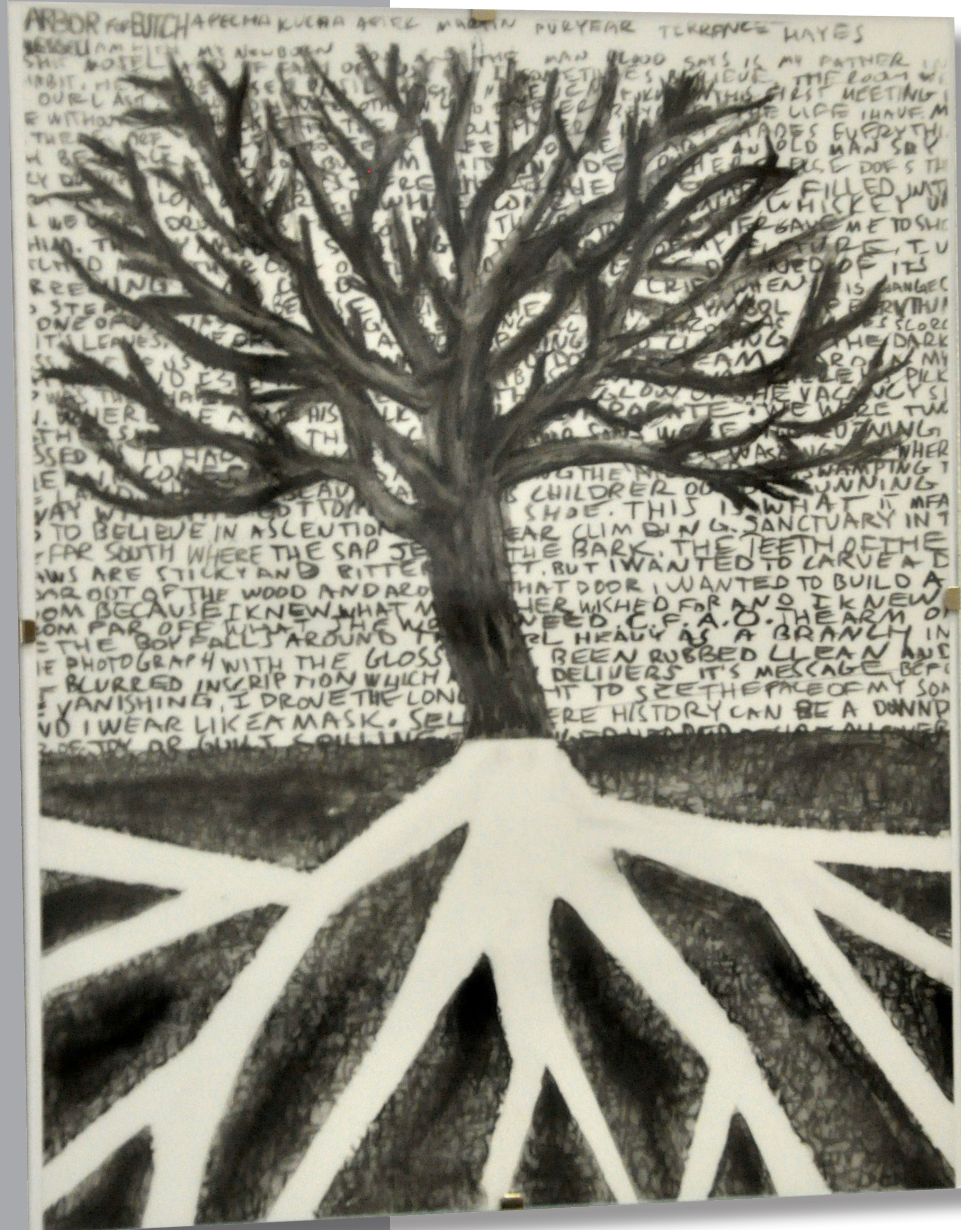
"Each a Dance: Improvisations with Craig Signs"

Artist: Corrie Baldauf

Author: Paul Beatty 2012

Media: Car Paint on Vinyl

Statement: "I have spent my life moving. Like Paul Beatty, my parents decided my first moves. My mother was raised in a Jewish family and my father was raised in a Catholic family. I quickly learned how this split was received in several areas in the Midwest. In *White Boy Shuffle*, Beatty describes how the way he danced conveyed his history. Living in an urban setting, his moves were not well received. At first. That is how it goes. Inevitably, children that move find a way to hold their own."



"Arbor for Butch"

Artist: Robert Zahorsky

Author: Terrance Hayes 2013

Media: Graphite on Paper

Statement: "Initially the poem drew me in as it references the work of the sculptor, Martin Puryear. The method of organization in the poem (using "Pecha Kucha Night") was also intriguing. Hayes divides his poem into twenty parts using Puryear's titles as subheadings. Ultimately relationships between the writer and his world, between the writer and his estranged father are expressed metaphorically through the rich symbolism of a tree."

