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.

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**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

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 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

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**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

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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