

# ~~WORDS~~ ON CANVAS

Walks

WRITING COMPETITION



2024 WINNERS



This year **Words Walks on Canvas** invited University of Florida and Santa Fe College students to reflect on artworks and 'walking,' understood as human-powered travel at slow speeds on foot or wheels. The theme emerged from a partnership with UF School of Architecture Assistant Professor Sarah Gamble, whose creative research on walking as a tool for the design process employs a kiosk to dispense prompts and short literature about walking. Winning competition entries will be available at the Walking Station while installed at the Harn Museum of Art through June 2024.

The judges for Words on Canvas 2024, Errol Nelson, Harn Student Engagement Manager and Eric Segal, Harn Director of Education and Curator of Academic Programs note:

We are profoundly grateful to all those who submitted their remarkable poetry and prose to Words on Canvas this year. These writings were works of art in themselves, crafted with thought, wit, and feeling, as they invited readers to walk into the worlds they evoke. We thank each of you for looking closely, writing carefully and gamely submitting. Congratulations on the impressive results of your fine efforts.

Watch for next year's competition at [harn.ufl.edu/wordsoncanvas](http://harn.ufl.edu/wordsoncanvas)



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## Daydreamer's Repose

By John Paul Fournier

Goodnight my Love,

Dream of a wind-woven thread, circling around and throughout you. Feel the surrounding air as you breathe it in

And breathe it out.

Color it. Make it a color that you can trace, something so visible that it makes the cord seem tangible. Feel it sailing through your hand. Watch it beaming through the sky like the first light of dawn when the sun perks up from the horizon, casting out the night with a celebration of blooming, transitioning colors.

Let the thread guide you, follow it with the patience of a king following the illustrious Northern Star.

Leave behind the discomforts of your present; don't stress over the implications of your travels, for by the time you dwell on them, they're already in the past.

The accompanying wind keeps track of your worries; the colored cord knows your truth better than you do – trust it. It moves your feet – now lighter than snow – to a coastal region blanketed by a salt-seasoned fresh breeze. Dunes of sand present themselves with pied embellishments of various shells, while rolling tides cheer your name and parades of white foam expire in their attempt to reach you.

Palmetto trees wave farewell before you shift regions.

The mountain range greets you in a manner similar to a queen's guards watching her pass through her main hall — stationary and still, with the utmost respect and devotion. Yet conversely, the snow falls into your arms with a gentle touch, before comfortably melting away. The wind then quickly picks up, and suddenly that calming gust turns into a strong, indiscriminating gale. Swarms of snow blur together in their endless race to escape, and the tough mountains begin to sweat; your world becomes blindingly white, your legs – instead of being nigh weightless – feel filled with painful clots of jagged, scratching stones. Each breath invites a stinging cold under your roof, provoking your mind to lash out in a panicked desperation. You feel your feet being buried by the fallen bodies of lifeless snow; yet you cannot see your burial, for your eyelids – now frozen shut – keep you in the darkness.

“Escape.” “Turn around.” Grappling despair convinces you to give up on your venture. Psychological tugs of warmth try to pull you onto another path; In your inescapable darkness, a vision from your mind shows you a trail made of heated stones, outlined by flaming gates. The destination is a strange, unpromising land, with the only guarantee being warmth – an escape from this frightening cold. One. Two. Three. Four. You free your feet from their numbing coffin, and take a few steps towards the promise of heat. Five. Six. Seven. \*Thump\* Having tripped over what felt like a stiff wire, you pick yourself up onto your feet and look back. It’s the thread. Even in the void of your eyelids, you can see it clearly; The thread, now in a stale, straight line – opposite to your wavering will – makes you no promise or guarantee, yet you trust its judgment.

The thread lies confidently perpendicular to the fiery path of your mind’s desire; You’re in the middle of fruitless comfort and pure uncertainty. One. Two. One. Two. Three. Each step in your pacing is a landed blow from the fight between your brain and your gut. One, two, jab. One, two, hook. Thoughts scurry through your head faster than the bullets of snow.

One.

Two.

Three. Four.

Five. Six. Seven. Eight.

Quickly, before you have the time to change your mind, you extend your arm and grab a hold of the wind-woven thread. Heat swells out from your hand and into your arm, pouring down to your feet and building up to your head. The icy dumbbells that weighed down your eyelids finally melt, and you open your eyes to see a clear atmosphere. No blizzard. No snow. No clouds. No heated stones. Just you, your thread, and the loyal mountains. Now walking on the path of the thread, you feel your legs almost defy gravity once again as a light snowfall begins. Domes of snow gather nearby to watch you traverse into the grasslands, and the now distant mountains glance over at the far-off tree line, whose roots –while cursed to be stationary, unable to come closer to you in adoration – still teem with life.

Fields of dancing feather grass and blossoming flowers jump at the sight of you, excited by the wind. Sailing leaves vie for your attention, floating along your line of sight, yet still your colored string keeps you on your path. The sunset, playing the role of a motley-colored beacon blooms into easy, comfortable colors over your destination. Through the wispy hues of soft orange and purple-fading-to-blue, you make out your journey's end from the translucent pane of light; you're back home.

The sun sets, your eyes adjust, your mind already adjusted. Your thread, still visible in the early night, leads back to your room. The town looks the same as you left it, yet it feels much easier to maneuver through the dark.

Once in your room, change out from your voyage-worn clothes into cloud-sewn sleepwear. Let your gentle thread hold your hand and tuck you into your sheets, and seep into the mattress' embrace. Close your eyes, feel the warmth of slumber coax your mind to rest – lubricate your stream of consciousness. Breathe in the thread, reflect on your adventure – you're safe now. Allow the thread to brew in your lungs so it can stir for you wondrous dreams, dreams worthy of your sweetness. Now let it out, and from your exhale release reality.



image: Claude Monet, *Champ d'avoine (Oat Field)*  
1890, Gift of Michael A. Singer

## For my foremothers

By Hailee Spoor

to walk onto this canvas  
is as simple as breathing  
because

to be a woman  
is an experience which transcends  
paint and brushstrokes

to be a woman is  
blatant hungry eyes  
roving over a carnal  
exterior, the address of my  
soul written into this  
bumbling mass of particles

to be a woman  
is abject objectification  
of flesh, pondering the worth  
of the skin stretched over  
the muscle and bone  
that is me

me

Me

to be a woman  
is to hear history  
whisper, its hands  
gripping your shoulders  
as it leans down to the  
shell of your ear,  
“you are but a woman”

to be a woman  
is to trace this fading figure,  
her silence palpable, because  
she knows we will understand  
that even if she spoke  
her words would fall like



rain, not strong enough  
to hold their shape  
to be a woman  
is a war, a demand,  
they refuse to cognize,  
insisting we are nothing  
consequential, victims  
of biology, condemned to  
live life for everyone  
but ourselves.

I am a woman  
and I see them, their shadows  
follow me as I wade through  
their ocean, fury lacing my tears  
as they race down to join theirs.  
in my mind, I storm onto this  
canvas and unleash the flood  
of all our words, all of our anger  
because I am a woman:  
a walking amalgamation of  
all the women who marched  
before, straight into the perpetual  
battle for our right  
to Be

image: Isabel Bishop, *Three Men at Union Square*  
c. 1930, Museum purchase, funds provided by an anonymous  
donor and the James G. and Caroline Julier Richardson Fund

## Bloomscape

By Josef Quiroz

Someday soon, our descendants will experience fields of flowers through the pixels of fancy tablets and in the timeworn pages of art textbooks - today's chartreuse fields coated in lilac and *pêche* petals with floral aromas that settle on clothes will be yesterday's, as they immerse themselves in the virtual realities of their digital landscapes.

But I will only see *paysage fleuri* - the time after winter where the earth dons its multicolored quilt, and *lumière de l'aube* - the dawn light that transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary, and *sentier de chien* - the trail of crushed grass dogs leave as they chase tiny aviators.

And I'll never forget the whispers-of-the-wind swaying through poppy and oat or the warmth of a hand as our fingers lie entwined on cool grass, wishing I was as serene as *Giverny*, unbothered by conclusions and numb to the relentless voyage of time, the final flourish of our longest friend.



image: Claude Monet, *Champ d'avoine (Oat Field)*  
1890, Gift of Michael A. Singer

## Walk of Names

By Christelle Beau De Rochars

### Walk of Names

Said a child to his mother, as the two strolled down the beach,  
While the wind blew and the blazing sun fell fast in the western sky,  
“Mother dear, what are these coarse grains that squish under my feet,  
This fluff in which we leave a print and on which the seashells lie?”  
The mother smiled, and gathering a handful of the stuff in her hand,  
Said, “My dear child, it is called sand.”

“And what is it called,” asked the child, as the two continued to roam,  
“When the sea water behaves so, rolling and rolling toward us,  
And determinedly makes for us, but gives up in crashing foam?  
How it rises to a mighty height then stoops to kiss the sand thus?  
The mother breathed in the salty smell the dancing water gave,  
And laughed, “My child, it is called a wave.”

The sun as it departed from watching the beach, left a painting in the air;  
The sky that was blue now swirled with crimson among the cloudy isles.  
“But Mother,” said the child, “What are those  
phantoms that float freely up over there?  
That flap and soar and come toward the shore, crying all the while?”  
The mother chuckled and watching the flapping and the soaring lulls,  
Answered, “My child, they are called gulls.”

Mused the child, "I know the constant sound of the waves coming down,  
Sand's crunch under foot, and gulls' cries; but what Mother dear,  
Is that whooshing sound that bends the tall tree like a vertical frown,  
And that even now blows my hair into my eye and my ear?  
The mother closed her eyes and felt the blow over her bare skin,  
And replied, "That, my dear child, is the wind."

At last, the darkness came creeping on, and the pair turned to leave.  
The child looked up into his mother's face as he lay sleepily in her arms.  
"And what, Mother dear, is the reason that you comfort me when I grieve?  
The reason that you carry me now, and save me from all alarms?"  
The mother smiled and laid a kiss on the child's sleeping brow, gently as  
a dove.  
And she whispered, "My dear child, it is called love."



image: Harold Newton, *Beach Scene*, undated, The Florida Art Collection, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers

# Who Walks Among the Southern Pines

By Jacob Bumgardner

Step by step history saunters itself into being  
With poise and simple dignity,  
Pressing down on the soil to get to work  
Among the pines and in the sunny spaces between,  
Wide enough to keep you looking.

We walk together,<sup>1</sup> holding hands  
With the living and dancing  
With the ghosts, in these limitless  
Woods, working straight-backed and slow.

Product<sup>2</sup> gets shipped up North,  
Parcels get put into ships and lamps, and  
Pine trees wilt like any  
Plant but slower, collecting moss, drying, then burning.

Sherman takes his walk and  
Smoke gets in his eyes from  
Savannah on fire, 'cause the wind blows northwest<sup>3</sup> in the  
Summer and dusts off the ashes.

After Langston Hughes writes his song  
About daybreak in Alabama,  
And fills it with the scent of pine needles<sup>4</sup>  
And red clay after rain,

Wilson comes down from Harlem to get  
Paint on his hands and the thinner smell never goes away, coming  
With the narrowing sound — unforgettable, something tearing,  
A hemorrhage, a harvest,<sup>5</sup> a rumble of  
Something below, churning, pushing up on our feet.

<sup>1</sup> *In 1882 New York businessman Charles K. Dutton operated a turpentine and naval stores company in Florida and received a contract for convict labor. Dutton preferred to work leased convicts ...*

<sup>2</sup> *...Because, he says, “turpentine culture was exhausting work, it was difficult to obtain enough [free] labor for the proper cultivation of any great number of trees.” ...*

<sup>3</sup> *... [and] Natives of Florida’s piney woods would quickly abandon the work when any other type of livelihood became available — Jeffrey A. Drobney, *Where Palm and Pine Are Blowing**

<sup>4</sup> *At the peak of the timber cutting in the 1890s and first decade of the new century, the longleaf pine forests of the Sandhills were providing millions of board feet of timber each year. ...*

<sup>5</sup> *...The timber cutters gradually moved across the South; by the 1920s, most of the “limitless” virgin longleaf pine forests were gone. — Jerry Simmons, “ASLC Large Operation from Beginnings”*

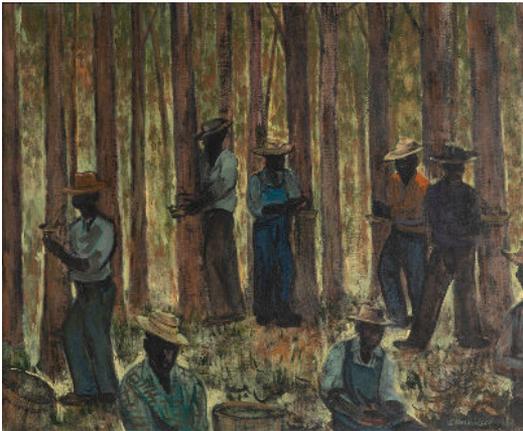


image: Ellis Wilson, *Pulling Turpentine*, c. 1944, Museum purchase, funds provided by the Fogler Family Endowment, with additional funds provided by the David A. Cofrin Acquisition Endowment

# Twilight Song of the Rural Tapestry

By Shizhen (Jasper) Jia

古木荫下耕者行，  
童牧骑牛歌声清。  
广宇苍穹心欢畅，  
时光如泉流不停。  
叶摇曳见岁月长，  
童稚笑声甘如糖。  
劳作休息皆有序，  
夕阳道上牛行缓。



Under ancient woods, the plowman strides,  
While the cowherd boy with song abides.  
The wide universe, hearts soar unconfined,  
As time flows on, like springs in mind.

Leaves sway, showing length of years,  
Childish laughter sweet as sugar appears.  
Work and rest, in order neatly bind,  
On the sunset path, the cow strolls behind.

## Camino, Marche, Siúlaim

by Jayde Skye

If Jesus could walk on water,  
why are there some who are unable to stand on land?  
the dull ache of legs that feel like static and thousands of pins pinching  
that overcomes me

“Que perezosa”, my ancestors would say

“Ponte las pilas!”

sometimes I wonder

if I was dropped in the middle of nowhere

how long I'd have to go

until I'd see the end of the world

and if I were dropped in the middle of the ocean

would I ever choose not to walk again

treading on glass is painful

walking side by side comforting

and strolling alone peaceful

the pace when searching for refuge; desperate

when exploring; curious

when reaching your resting place; sluggish

there were no strolls on their journey to where I am now

in fact, they bordered on running

through field and swamps and sand and marshes

the way I wish I could staring out of the car window

the way they wished I would never have to

visibly traversing in forbidden land was once a death sentence

one they managed to escape to a barren beginning

so now I walk because they ran

I walk because some cant

and I walk because once I began I never could stop

with the ferocity of an 'extinct' tribe  
the passion of revolutionaries who tore down castles and ate the rich  
and the resilience of a people who persevered through unimaginable  
hunger

**Where** they wish to go

**All** they worked for

Looking ahead

Knowledge they bestowed upon me in mind

I

Camino

Marche

Siúlaim

Translation key:

Que Perezosa – “how lazy”.

Ponte las pilas – “put in the batteries”, idiom meaning to work harder.

Camino/marche/siúlaim - (I) walk.



image: Louis Comfort Tiffany, *Castillo de San Marcos*, 1885  
The Florida Art Collection, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers



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