

# WORDS ON CANVAS

Harn Museum of Art

College Students  
+  
Creative Writing  
+  
Art

## WRITING COMPETITION



2023 WINNERS

Artistic interpretation is both personal and communal. This duality is captured in the *Words on Canvas* writing competition, where the participants engage in personal interpretations and Harn Museum of Art community engages, in turn, with their writing.

We hope you enjoy this year's winning entries. Feel free to take this booklet with you through the galleries and see what other stories emerge and inspire you during your visit.

### Image Credits:

(Cover) Lesley Dill. **White Hinged Dress**, 1994. Gift of Earl and Christy Powell. 2018.39.1

Frank Henry Shapleigh. **Orange**, undated. The Florida Art Collection, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers. 2020.18.859

Yvonne Jacquette. **Chelsea Composite II**, 1995. Museum purchase, gift of Mary Ann P. Cofrin. 2003.12.1

Fabiola Jean-Louis. **Marie Antionette is Dead**, image 2016; printed 2021. Museum purchase, funds provided by the Caroline Julier and James G. Richardson Acquisition Fund. 2022.4

Herman Herzog. **Lake Alachua (Fisherman's Creek Landing)**, c.1900. The Florida Art Collection, Gift of Samuel H. and Roberta T. Vickers. 2020.18.211

Armando Morales. **Adiós a Sandino, from La Saga de Sandino**, 1993. Gift of the Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin. 2010.13.5

Osamu Kojima. **Nostalgia 07-01p**, 2007. On loan from the collection of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz. L2018.81

Harn Photography by Foad Seyed Mohammadi and Randy Batista.

We wish to thank the *Words on Canvas* judges who devoted their time, expertise and interest to the challenging task of selecting winners from among the many fine submissions by the students from the University of Florida and Santa Fe College.

**Marsha Bryant**, PhD, Professor of English & Distinguished Teacher Scholar

**Ke (Edward) Sun**, PhD, Adjunct Lecturer, UF School of Architecture



Dr. Marsha Bryant and Dr. Ke (Edward) Sun

Our appreciation goes out to all those who participated in *Words on Canvas*, looking closely, writing carefully and submitting their writing. Congratulations to each of you for your fine efforts. Please watch for next year's competition at [harn.ufl.edu/wordsoncanvas](http://harn.ufl.edu/wordsoncanvas)



Inspired by Osamu Kojima, *Nostalgia 07-01p*, 2007.

**Hannah Miller** (Journalism)

***Untitled***

I. A package of memory bulging in tens of directions, taunting the weight of time slipping beneath us. A mound of element, shapeless in figure. An incongruous mish mash of time swept up into dustbins. The cracks lead nowhere but inside.

II. What is one to do with a heap of nostalgia? I could bury this nostalgia, domineering the achy memories, storing them in the basement to collect dust. I could carry it in my arms like an infant, as we exchange a knowing glance, a testimony to life's endearing cycles of birth and rebirth. I need more than a brief exchange with nostalgia, one comparable to exchanging smiles in a grocery store. I need those years back.

III. I imagine I had become the size of a pinpoint. As tiny as I had become, I slip through the cracks and beyond the surface. I caress the walls of nostalgia with microscopic fingertips. I step through this lifetime once again, just as it was. With every footstep comes an awakening of the depth and breadth of my every minute on this ordinary planet. If only we could venture within it.

IV. I am nostalgia. I am this mound of clay brought forth from the Earth. I am but a moment in time built out of moments in time. I am a bundle of mementos of life tucked quietly away into this vessel I call home. I sit alone amongst billions, a heap jutting in tens of directions. I wait to be understood, to be examined, to be fully realized. I am my own desire to create this pathway home – cracks that lead inside.

V. What are we but time?

## Table Of Contents

**Shibani Rana** – 1st Place

*I Wear My Words*

**Yael Hamaoui** – 2nd Place

*Orange*

**Stephanie Kramer** – 3rd Place

*Iridescent Lies*

**Marion Cassard** – Judge's Award

*La reine est morte, vive la reine*

*(The queen is dead, long live the queen)*

**Eden Zdravko** – Honorable Mention

*Florida Rain*

**Kayla Conde** – Honorable Mention

*On Armando Morales's Adios a Sandino,*

*from La Saga de Sandino, 1993*

**Hannah Miller** – Honorable Mention

*Untitled*

**Shibani Rana** (Data Science)

*I Wear My Words*

I hold my words like Atlas.  
The weight of the world hangs off my shoulders in feminine sweeps,  
Frills scrape against the floor.  
A round skirt made of dirt and metals and salty seas.  
But "The World is not Conclusion", it survives and it grows.

I grip my words like weapons.  
Words like knives.  
My words are my name. I carve my legacy into the ground, into the  
pleats and folds.  
I make my words permanent.  
"Faith slips"  
But my words, they "laugh and rally and roll" and they weep and  
beg and stroll.  
They fall with me in layers of tulle and silk, hidden in copper and  
bronze.

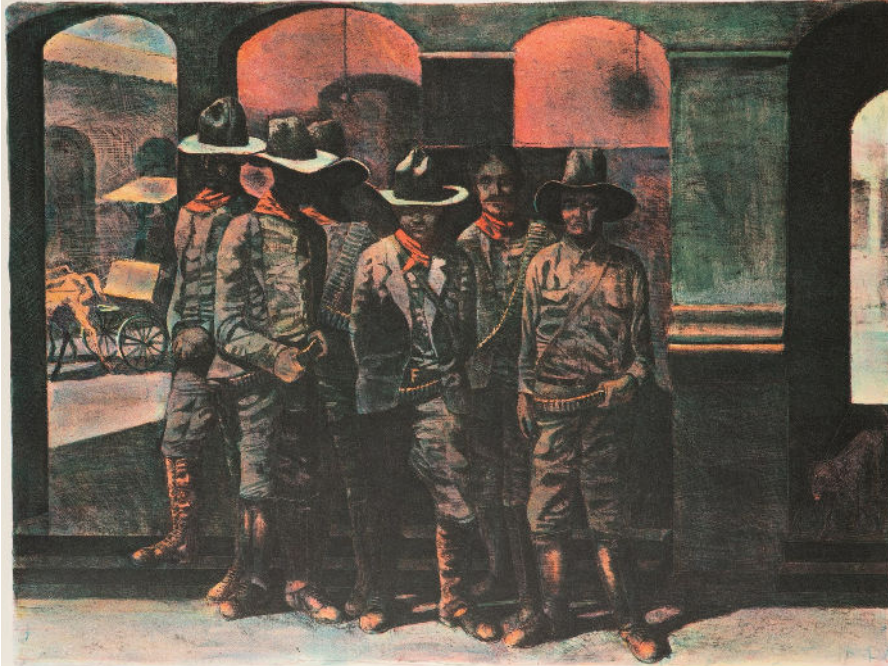
I don my words like armor.  
I march into battle,  
My dress lifts with every step.  
I shout bullets.  
When my rage billows with my dress, it rains gunfire.  
"Contempt of Generations,"  
But it bows to my strategies of war,  
And as I squall my words of peace, I drown in their defense.

Leftover revolution runs up the laces  
of the confidants' work boots, across  
their fresh bandoliers, in their unanimity.  
Against the palm-frond green, they threaten  
with the casualness of American Westerns,  
the wood-wheeled wagon awaiting its cue  
in the brightened courtyard, burros at the ready.

The wives and mothers who press their uniforms  
are not pictured. In the café kitchens  
and stuccoed homes beyond the painted archways,  
they count their blessings in the form of family, rum,  
and silenced volcanoes on the Managua skyline.

It is still 1934 for the posthumous Robin Hoods  
of Sandino, who mourn him as vigilantly  
as the billowing mountainscape. Meanwhile,  
like hidden coral snakes in the valleys between,  
the women slowly shed their aprons  
in favor of second-hand fatigues  
for *la revolución dentro de la revolución*.

Inspired by Armando Morales, *Adiós a Sandino*, from *La Saga de Sandino*, 1993.



**Kayla Conde** (English)

**On Armando Morales's *Adios a Sandino*, from *La Saga de Sandino*, 1993**

Oil and beeswax reveal six sober faces  
under wide-brims, donning matching regalia:  
Sandinistas, red with sunset, are the motif  
of Nicaraguan graffiti outside cafés where gaunt,  
brindled street-dogs beg for *gallo pinto*.

I sing my words like lullabies.  
Sometimes I am a mother, sometimes a sister.  
Sometimes I sit on tree branches covered in snow and carol from  
the beak of a songbird.  
Sometimes I take my dress and spin with my daughter in the fields,  
I tell her, yell as loud as you can! Wake the masses, tell them to sing  
their "Strong Hallelujahs!"  
I sew her a poem dress, one for my sister, one for my mother and  
her mother before.  
Sing the words of a woman. Sing the wonders and woes alike.

I wear my words for the world to see me.  
Take my soul line by line.  
Trust the angered fabric, caress the tears of lace.  
Ruffle the skirt until you see  
The lives I live are written in every thread, every wired line.

*"Narcotics cannot still the Tooth  
That nibbles at the soul—"  
So a poem dress is written  
For every moment you are bold.*

Inspired by Lesley Dill, *White Hinged Dress*, 1994. Cover Image.



**Yael Hamaoui** (International Studies)

### **Orange**

This color came to kill me in my sleep last night,  
And decided at the last moment  
It didn't really feel like slitting my throat.

This color shows up once a year at Publix,  
And I buy five at a time,  
Persimmon juice dripping down my fingers.  
One day I'll have enough to just  
Make a whole new persimmon.

But the wind knows, and the wind likes to gossip. Because one minute, you'll feel the humid summer air, and the next, the wind will swell and grow cold as its way of telling you that a storm is coming. The wind will push you towards land, towards safety, and if you're not moving fast enough, it will push you harder, and sharper until the wind itself gets confused and starts spinning and screaming and your arms get caught in its terrified embraced and your words get drowned out by the power of it all. It is fear in its purest form, and all you can do is wait. Because once the storm is over, the wind will calm down, relax its grip, lower its voice, warm back up, and apologize for being so dramatic.

When we told momma last night that we would go fishing early in the morning, she told us to remember how Florida rain is. She told us to remember that it comes on slow, and then all at once, like falling in love. She told us to remember that Florida rain likes to play tricks and that it's a dangerous game to play. She told us to remember to listen to the wind because the wind always knows what the Florida rain is thinking and doesn't like it when we don't pay attention. So when we went out on the lake, and spotted a few grey clouds farther south, and listened to the wind tell us its tales and grow strong in its resolve, we turned back. Momma was standing on the front steps with her hands on her hips, mouthing something as she watched us tie the boat to the wooden dock. As we got closer, the wind carried her voice to us:

“Now what did I tell y'all 'bout Florida rain?”

Inspired by Herman Herzog, *Lake Alachua (Fisherman's Creek Landing)*, c. 1900.





**Eden Zdravko** (Political Science)

***Florida Rain***

My momma always says that Florida rain likes to come on slow, and then all at once. Like the syrup she drizzles on my pancakes, or afternoons in August. She also says that Florida rain likes to play tricks. Sometimes, it will stay tucked in the clouds on the verge of spilling over for days at a time, like it's saying: "I'll be ready in a minute!" Sometimes, you'll see a little cloud in the distance at 3:00 pm, and by 3:04 pm that little cloud has grown up, and gotten angry, and it will try to swallow you whole. You never know what Florida rain will decide to do until it has already done it; and by then, you've either wasted your whole day inside playing with the fuzz on the carpet, or your clothes are soaked through and you're blinking through the heavy drops trying to remember which way is home.

This color is too bright, too much, I wear it every other week  
In the form of a too fancy dress, and people ask me:  
where are you going?  
Like none of us can wear a dress that's a little too nice  
Without somewhere to go.

This color is the color of my favorite marigold flowers  
I used to plant in a garden I never remembered to finish.  
G-d, it's a good thing, I'd have crashed the car into the garden  
The first time I started to learn how to drive.  
How typical of this color.

Other things typical of this color include:

My dead grandma's second favorite shirt.

One half of my college's theme.

Everyone's least favorite except for in pumpkin lattes.

Well, I've never seen a pumpkin latte.

More than anything else,

This color cut me up like a tangerine.

Inspired by Frank Henry Shapleigh, *Orange*, undated.

**Stephanie Kramer** (English)

*Iridescent Lies*

Behold the variegated city!

Skyscrapers dip into the bottomless sky,

While shadows drowned violet flood the in-betweens,

Flicker shyly, retreat from amber streaks.

But that's not what deepens the darkest corners, no—

No, they built coruscating sights

Of neon-welded swirling spells.

Dancing inventions against the haze.

Glass panes reflect, reflect, reflect,

Unnatural beams in lieu of daylight,

As if blinding eyes will make us notice any less,

The void of warmth in the undying bright.

Iridescent lies,

Stained by hues scattered,

Blurred, caught,

And still.

But in a silence that was only apparent,

The Other gathered her weapons.

Walled up in terror,

She is nonetheless getting ready for her time.

The queen must now pass her turn.

The time has come for her to yield her finery.

Draped in her sheets of false nobility,

She is eclipsed by the arrival of the goddess

Who makes her new azure dress spin.

Her magic now sets the pace.

Adorned with a thousand and one flowers,

She stands up for her sisters.

They want her to be quiet,

They call her "witch".

They tell her she must remember her place,

She faces them and gives them an icy stare.

They vociferate,

She liberates.

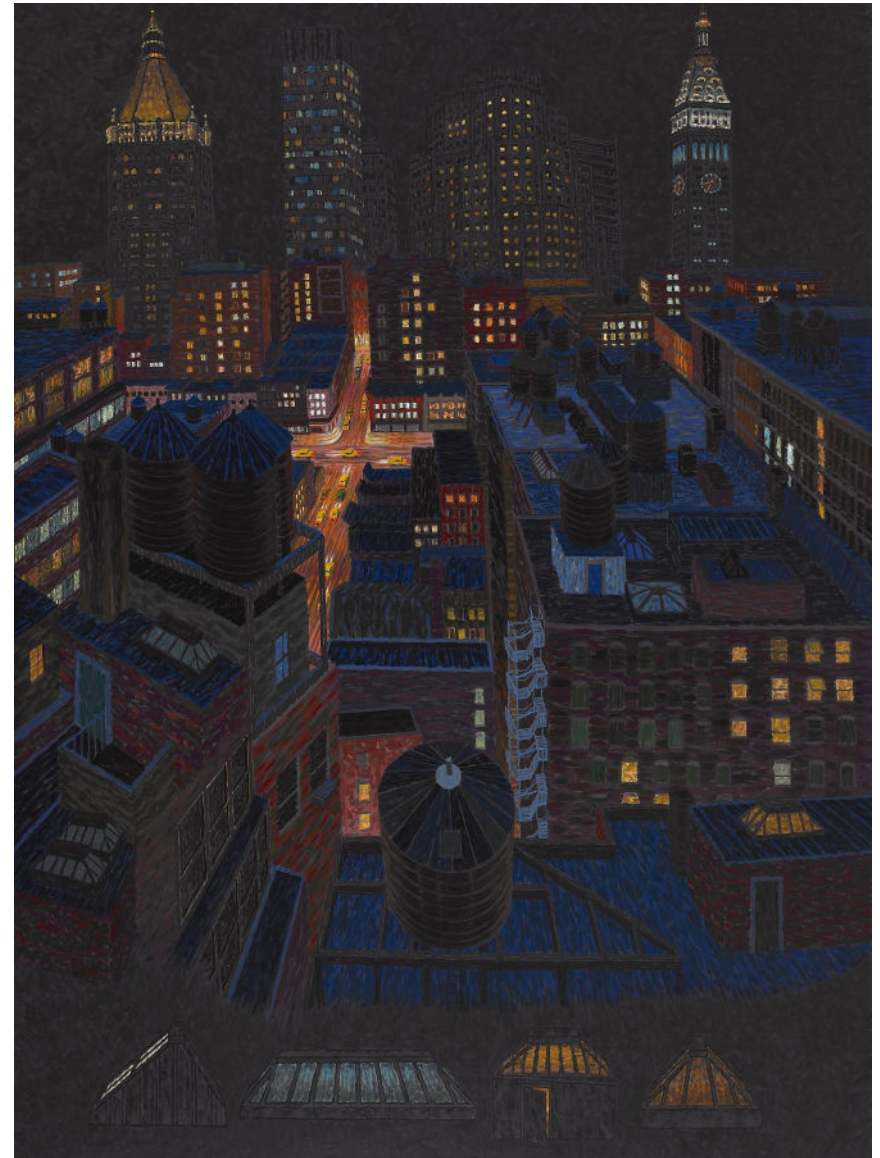
No matter, they will not have her hatred.

The queen is dead, long live the queen.

Sa magie donne maintenant la mesure.  
Parée de mille et une fleurs,  
Elle se dresse pour ses sœurs.  
Ils voudraient la voir se taire,  
La traite de sorcière.  
Ils lui disent qu'il faut qu'elle se rappelle sa place  
Mais elle leur fait face et revêt son regard de glace.  
Ils vocifèrent,  
Elle libère.  
Qu'importe, ils n'auront pas sa haine.  
La reine est morte, vive la reine.

***The queen is dead, long live the queen***

Born from the shadows of the Enlightenment,  
Of the fatal and futile prestige, she is the mother.  
She directs, demands, castigates, freezes,  
In the name of a universalism that causes vertigo.  
Dressed in the imperial fabric,  
She entertains the madness of her royal court.  
With the Master's hand,  
She disguises the horror of her being.  
In the name of her dazzling obscurantism,  
She plunders, crushes, silences.



Inspired by Yvonne Jacquette, *Chelsea Composite II*, 1995.



Inspired by Fabiola Jean-Louis, *Marie Antionette is Dead*, image 2016; printed 2021.

**Marion Cassard (Sociology)**

***La reine est morte, vive la reine***

Née des ombres des Lumières,  
Du fatal et futile prestige elle est la mère.  
Au nom d'un universalisme qui donne le vertige,  
Elle dirige, exige, fustige, fige.  
Vêtue de l'étoffe impériale,  
Elle anime la folie de sa cour royale.  
De sa main de maître,  
Elle maquille l'horreur de son être.  
Au nom de son éclatant obscurantisme,  
Elle pille, écrase, réduit au mutisme.

Mais dans un silence seulement apparent,  
L'Autre a rassemblé son armement.  
Emmurée dans la terreur,  
Elle a pourtant préparé son heure.  
La reine doit maintenant passer son tour.  
Le temps est venu pour elle de remettre ses atours.  
Drapée dans ses draps de fausse noblesse,  
Elle est éclipsée par l'arrivée de la déesse  
Qui fait tourner sa nouvelle robe azur.