

# WORDS ON CANVAS

WRITING COMPETITION



2018 WINNERS

Art is a highly personal experience; it is also a collective one. We might say that the meaning of a painting, sculpture or photograph remains incomplete until it has been viewed, discussed or written about. It is in sharing what we see when we look, that we learn more about art and about ourselves. *Words on Canvas* exists to facilitate this shared understanding. For the writer, it is a chance to look beyond the surface of a work of art. For you, the reader, it is a chance to share another's perspective for a moment. We hope you enjoy this year's winning *Words on Canvas* entries. Feel free to take this booklet with you into the Harn's galleries and see what stories emerge and inspire you during your visit.

**Cover Image:**

Katsumata Chieko

*Sango (coral)*, 2016

Gift of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz

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 at the University of Florida and Santa Fe College.

*Words on Canvas* 2018 Judges:

**David Leavitt**, Professor and Co-Director of Creative Writing,  
UF English Department

**Ange Mlinko**, Professor, UF English Department

**Maya Stanfield-Mazzi**, Associate Professor, UF School of Art +  
Art History

Our appreciation goes out to all those who participated in *Words on Canvas*, looking closely, writing carefully and gamely submitting their writing. Congratulations to each of you for your fine efforts.

*Words on Canvas* is made possible by the generous support of the UF Honors College.

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Brianna Steidle — Psychology, University of Florida

Honorable Mention

### Old Mac Deluxe

A man inhales the ethanolic darkness,  
laughs, and trades away his shawl of worry  
as he nears an amber-soaked psychosis.  
With one pull he shrugs, unsure whether the cloth  
draped around his aging shoulders  
will be passed to the next generation  
or, sooner rather than later,  
be draped over his saturated casket.

In his cup he sees himself: a boy

draped over his saturated casket.

Sooner rather than later,

the bottle passes to the next generation.

He drops his degenerate shoulders—

another pull—shrugs off an inconsequential cloth,

and embraces an amber-soaked prognosis.

His laugh serenades the discarded shawl of worry

as the man inhales the ethanolic darkness.



### Inspired By

El Anatsui

*Old Man's Cloth*, 2005

Museum purchase with funds from friends of the Harn Museum

*Taylor Mott-Smith — English, University of Florida*

*Honorable Mention*

### **Red on White**

Yayoi's womanhood came to her in visions of red on white. In first year, a boy with a long neck and sharp elbows called her "moon face" after classes ended for the day. There was still snow on the ground from the previous night's flurries and many children were playing in it, their faces reddened and steaming, entangled within itchy scarves and hats. The boy noticed Yayoi alone, tracing polka dots of exposed pavement with the toe of her snow boots, and he told her she had the roundest face he had ever seen. Big and round and flat like the moon, he said. When she hit him, she used the back of her open hand, just like her mother. His nose gave too easily against her small knuckles and with a soft popping noise, blood suddenly streamed from both his nostrils, pooling in the folds of his thick yellow scarf and dribbling down into the snow as he doubled over. When he pushed her back and onto the ground, she became transfixed with the color before her. She has seen red umbrellas on streets slicked in rain, ripe and rippled strawberries on the breakfast dish, red cars and red nail polish and red rubber balls, but never, Yayoi thought, was red so red than when it was as a drop of blood seeping into fresh snow.

Though it was her hand that drew the first and greatest pain of the fight, her punishment was far less severe than that of the sharp-elbowed boy. Boys are never to hit girls, even when girls hit first. She learned then that to be a girl would mean to live in a different set of rules. When Yayoi was twelve years old, she woke one

morning to find her own blood on the white sheet covering her bed. Perplexed, she touched around herself tenderly looking for the source and eventually found it between her thighs. She lightly touched the spot she had left on her bed. It was the greatest quantity of her own blood she had ever seen, and it was also curiously round, a nearly inorganic perfection of roundness, like a crudely rendered replica of her country's own flag. The dread-pinched feeling in Yayoi's throat and chest almost swallowed the dull ache that spread itself out between the distance of her hips. When her mother found her, and the blood, she said nothing at first. She left the room and returned with a small cotton item and a rag soaked in white vinegar. As she blotted at the stain with the rag, Yayoi's mother told her that what had happened was natural and would happen again, but when the blood was gone, she told her that this bleeding must be hidden from others, that it is a great shame. Never stain my sheets again, she said, and left.

Ten years later, Yayoi's best friend Kumiko was engaged to be married. You should start carrying a parasol, Kumiko said. That's what I do. It keeps the sun off my skin – men are only interested in women with pale skin. Kumiko taught Yayoi how to powder her face into paper-whiteness. She applied rouge to her cheeks with her fingertips and painted red lipstick on her lips with a tiny brush. When she was finished, she stood back and smiled. See, Yayoi? she said. With a little effort, you can be very beautiful. Although, I think you should wear your hair down at your shoulders. It makes your face look less round when you wear it that way.

Within the same year Yayoi began dating a man with small hands and an office job. Two months from the day they started dating, he told her it was time for them to sleep together. He laid her down and took off her clothes and told her that if she really was a virgin, she'd bleed for him. The pattern on his pillowcases, a tight net of white on a field of red, began to stretch itself across the headboard, down over the top of Yayoi's head, across her neck and onto the torso looming over her. The shifting red and white undulated and expanded until it filled her entire view, spiraling, sucking, dizzying. She felt like the world had folded up into itself and succumbed to the great moving mass of patterned white and red, and all she would ever see again was that pattern, those colors, moving like a pulse, hot and rhythmic and forever.

When the pattern calmed itself and shrank away, the room was dark and the man was gone. This would not be the last time the pattern overwhelmed her vision. It happened again and again, without warning, sometimes with the same pattern and sometimes with different ones. She called it self-obliterating. It filled her with fear. The red on white followed, dauntless, inescapable, a consequence constantly recalled. The only way to control it, she found, was to harness the colors herself, to own the red on white and the patterns and capture them within a frame of her own choosing. Within the canvas, with brush and paint, Yayoi learned to make the vision of her womanhood a vision of her own.



### **Inspired By**

Yayoi Kusama

*Nets-Infinity (TWOS)*, 2006

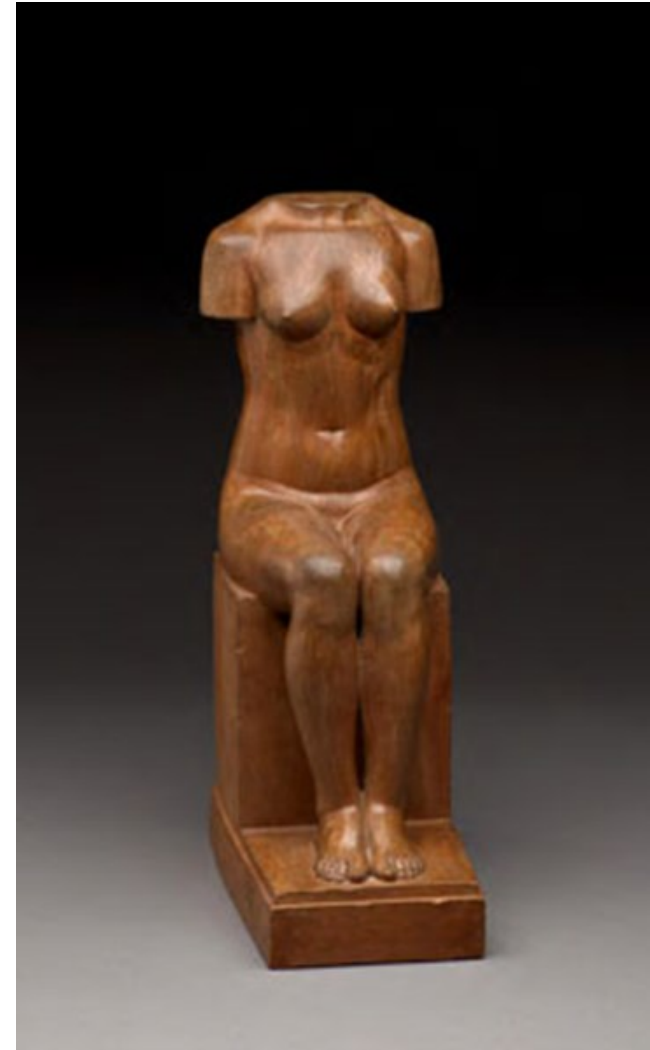
Museum purchase, funds provided by the David A. Cofrin Art Acquisition Endowment and friends of the Harn Museum

*Adrianna Lopez del Rincon — English and Pre-Vet,  
University of Florida  
Honorable Mention*

### **Seated Figure**

You can't put him on a pedestal, they told me,  
as I felt the distance between you and I grow.  
So I decided to become the pedestal myself to be closer to you.  
I took my head off my neck, so you would have somewhere  
comfortable to sit, and I took my arms and sanded bricks out of my  
bones, so I could stack them, under my legs and become tall,  
tall enough for you to have a view of the Redwoods that you  
always wished to see.  
Once I was finished, I let you climb your new pedestal to the top,  
and my Atlas back trembled beneath your weight.

One day the Redwoods took root around me,  
their soft wood climbed up my entire body.  
The wood grew around my breasts when I learned they were not  
yours, but mine.  
It grew around my shoulders when I straightened them from under  
your weight,  
and didn't care that you might lose your balance.  
And it grew around my stomach when I began to hunger for my  
own dreams,  
as it grew around my legs when I walked away from you.  
Now I sit on the pedestal I once made you,  
and my back rests.



### **Inspired By**

John Bradley Storrs

*Seated Figure*, 1995

Museum purchase by exchange, gift of William H. and Eloise R.  
Chandler

Alexis Paynter — *Biology, University of Florida*

3rd Place

### **The Wolf**

The night comes to us hidden in sheepskin,  
preying on the city and streets around,  
as each smoky tendril finds its way in

It wraps the day up in velvet and grins.  
Dressing us up in a shimmering gown,  
the night comes to us hidden in sheepskin.

Innocence is lost as it should have been,  
under the soft secrecy of its down  
as each smoky tendril finds its way in.

Nothing as gentle as this is a sin.  
Carrying each star proudly like a crown  
the night comes to us hidden in sheepskin.

We hide, but it always shifts us wherein  
the last of our inhibitions are drowned  
as each smoky tendril finds its way in.

What we learn of each other is akin  
to what we know of the truth in this town:

The night comes to us hidden in sheepskin,  
and each smoky tendril finds its way in.



### **Inspired By**

Tomomi Tanaka

*Black Flame*, 2015

Gift of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz

Photography by Randy Battista



Katherine McCall — *Economics, University of Florida*

2nd Place

### A Bird's Song

The bird sings  
but doesn't  
posed for flight  
for song,  
a pretty sight  
gone on too long.  
Trembling, it stands tall  
on the edge of a cliff  
forever to jump  
never to fall.

And what right is it  
of art to array?  
To take that bird  
and make that bird  
and give it  
a part in a play?

Can you even  
call it a bird?  
A song without sound,  
porcelain  
in thrall to a bird,  
the truth unfound.

An echo transposed  
through space and time.  
A world only seen  
through recreation.  
A secret supposed,  
its meaning composed,  
but the truth  
remains a frustration.



### Inspired By

Miyagwa Torano

*Incense Container, 2012*

Bequest of the Estate of Sandra G. Saltzman

Photography by Randy Battista

Danilo Marin — English, University of Florida

*1st Place*

## Hardening

It's no less alive  
than a Greek brandishing

his eternity  
in contrapposto,

though subtler in display  
as it acts the bleached fossil

of some defunct sea,  
locking verve inside

a Medusan clasp.



## Inspired By

Katsumata Chieko

*Sango (coral)*, 2016

Gift of Carol and Jeffrey Horvitz



HARN MUSEUM OF ART

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA