



Ekphrasis Inside
Building Bridges: Prison Arts Initiative
June 2026

Poetry created in response to artworks in KMA's exhibition,
Art in Bloom (June 11 - 14, 2026)

Katonah Museum of Art
Rehabilitation Through the Arts

Poets from Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

Anna
René
Shannon
T
Candace
Nailah
Jennifer
Debra
Isis
Ming
O'Sullivan
Keri
Marilyn
Fern
Sky
Snoopy

Editor & Teaching Artist
Pam Hart

Building Bridges: Prison Arts Initiative
Katonah Museum of Art & Rehabilitation Through the Arts

Story To Be Told

By Anna

I see colors so beautiful so bold
Astounding internal joy what a story to be told

Happiness deeply rooted in the ground, a description
off true love found an array of emotions
Holding tightly to a tree branch in full devotion

The horses represent me so free so wild
A wondrous scheme that brings forth my inner child
I am her and inside is him
Together we simply represent them

I listen closely listening to the tree language
With each word I'm released from anguish
Speaking to us like a tour guide
Closing my eyes to focus on what's inside

My hands clasped tightly to the tree's soul
Oh me oh my what a story to be told



For the Untitled Painting

By René

Escape the darkest box and find purpose.
Do you see it and pretend it's not there.
On an airy ocean front that docks the bay of lost souls.
The dots and blots using colors that are smeared.

Do you see it and pretend it's not there.
Submerged deeper than the surface.
The dots and blots using colors that are smeared.
How feelings define what worth is.

Submerged deeper than the surface.
Worth is how you word it.
How feelings define what worth is.
Rebirthing emerges.

Worth is how you word it.
On an airy ocean front that docks the bay of lost souls.
Rebirthing emerges.
Escape the darkest box and find purpose.



You Hold the Key

By René

I want to dip into your honey ocean
And let the sweet nectar quench my thirst.

First I
must tell you I've got a thing for you
bring to you
The spark that ignites the flame
Unlike anything
Ever imagined.
Unlike lost love from past tense.
As dense
As the fog that rolls in over grey skies
I've
Searched low and high
For a love as defined.
I bring to you
My heart
On a silver platter.
For it is rather bruised and battered but
It is yours for the duration of my stay
On this earthly plane.
A token of my affection
And I take you flaws and all
For you are my perfection.

Nature's Nectar: A Pantoum

By Shannon

So many shapes and colors
from light to dark
Every color of the rainbow
There's a bigger picture within

From light to dark
From the outside looking in
There's a bigger picture within
So many different lines

From the outside looking in
Red circles, green, yellow & blue
So many different lines
A lot more colors in them too

Red circles, green, yellow, & blue
Every color of the rainbow
A lot more colors in them too
So many shapes and colors



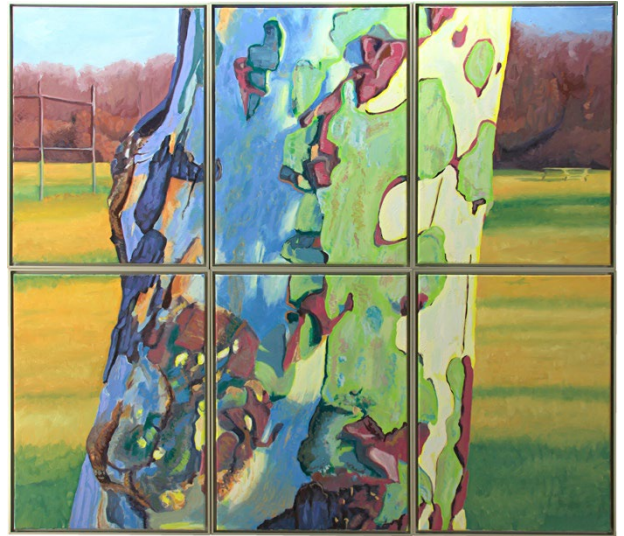
Trunk on George's Island

By T

I'm on a journey to expand from what I know
To go beyond what I see
This tree trunk is no ordinary landmark to me
As my hand paints & scrapes over its rough edges
A maple hyssop colored peel
A vibrant energetic abundance through my hand
is what
I feel.

The heat & heart on an October's day
Yet it's evening & the sky isn't grey
Nothing makes sense today
The brown starts to make a sound.

A spectrum is reflected in a singular
To encompass & embody all that is
The multi-tude questions the attitude of
same, difference, one or all
What we expect to see & what it's supposed to
be is never there standing tall
Tall as her trunk
Tall as her branches
To intrigue, to remind, to expose
The colors
Beneath our folds



Climb of Change

By Candace

My personal Mount Everest
Goal, focus, conquer
Every single step matters
Never defeated, denied

Goal, focus, conquer
Courage, hope, perseverance
Never defeated, denied
One, two, three steps forward

Courage, hope, perseverance
Mistakes, missteps, get back up
One, two, three steps forward
Learning, growing stronger

Mistakes, missteps, get back up
Every single step matters
Learning, growing stronger
My personal Mount Everest



A Free Man

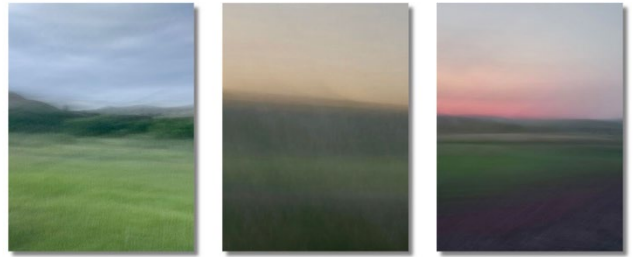
By Nailah

A Free Man, amongst Free Land
Surrounded by a peace so serene
Thoughts and feelings never to be seen
A Free Man, amongst the sky

Surrounded by a peace so serene
A euphoric ride through the blues and beautiful hues
A Free Man, amongst the sky
A feeling so alive

A euphoric ride through the blues and beautiful hues
The good, the bad, the beauty of it all
A Feeling so alive
To be alive is to be Free

The good, the bad, the beauty of it all
Thoughts and feeling never to be seen
To be alive is to be free
A Free Man amongst Free Land



A Mother's Love

By Jennifer

A woman carries her daughter
sheltered from the cold
The warmth in her eyes shine
brighter than colors so bold
Birds sheltered in each pocket
bring blossoms in each bloom
While horses gallop the ground
almost under foot
The mother watches on in wonder
as the child grows with care
The bloom of ageless love
whose beauty's beyond compare
The tree of life still grows
for one daughter to the next
Swaying with the breeze
that with life each should expect
Each generation can find shelter
and pass the story down the line
About a mother's love in winter
morning noon and night



Earth Strong Mother

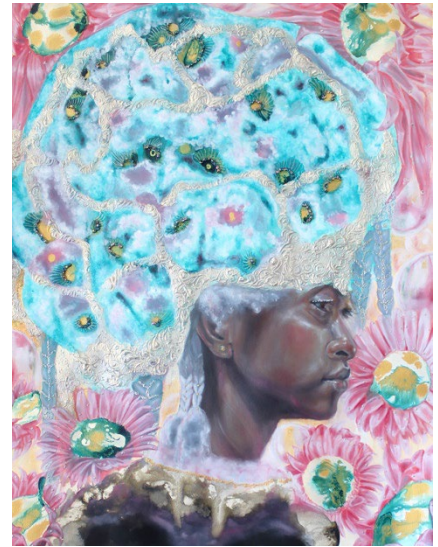
By Debra

Did they choose me because of my wisdom?
So here I carry the beauty of my people
A kaleidoscope of colors parade across my eyes
Blues, yellows, pink, white, brown, pride, joy

So here I carry the beauty of my people
Earth creation is on my face, focused on freedom
Blues, yellows, pink, white, brown, pride, joy
My hair, my glory, my age shows my wisdom

Earth creation is on my face, focused on freedom
My people, they call me mother earth, strong
My hair my glory my age shows my wisdom
My neck is strong to carry my crown, an example to my people

My people they called me Mother Earth, strong
A kaleidoscope of colors parade across my eyes
My neck is strong to carry my crown, an example to my people
Did they choose me because of my wisdom?



My Story

By Isis

A blank canvas in front of me
What colors should I pick?
I close my eyes
I clear my mind
And randomly pick
Eyes still closed
I take a dip
Paintbrush feeling thick
I ask myself, "What if?"
30 minutes later
I open my eyes
And see what I did
What I painted tells a story
of colors that tell my story
A story that is only for me
Orange for heart warm days
Bittersweet with a little tea
Purple for the love and royalty
my friends and family show me
Pink for the princess bedtime stories
A warm glass of milk and chocolate
chip cookies.
Green for backyard cookouts, laying
in the grass feeling a cool breeze.
Loving the sound of the ruffling
tree leaves.
Red for sad days, a broken heart
But also for Valentine's days with a
dozen roses. A glass filled with
Red Cat wine.
Blue for the bright beautiful sky
Cloud watching with my son or
jumping into the warm blue water
diving deep.
Brown for my skin color
Kissed with trickles of gold
Even the tree branches I
swung from as a kid
feeling free.

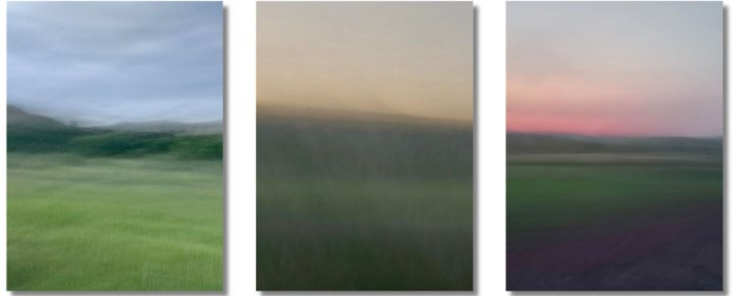


Yellow for yellow canaries
My grandfather's favorite bird
Something I will always adore
White for marshmallows
Melting in a s'more
My dad on camping trips
Laughing with my siblings
as he snores
Black for days I feel lost
Searching for a way out
This is my story in colors.
What is yours?

Different Shades of the Day

By Ming

There are different shades of the day
The colors of the sky match my mood
During the day the sun warms my face
as I stare into the green fields
When the sun starts to set, the pink
Glow in the sky makes me think
of a better life
I imagine being free, thinking of how
to start my night.
The soft wind sings to me and it's
a feeling of relaxation
My hair flows in the warm breeze
My day is going to come, when I am
finally free.
When it's cloudy, my day is dreary.
and I start to get these sad feelings.
After the storm, rainbows appear
So for now I'll have no fear.
There are different shades of the day.



Broken Piece

By O'Sullivan

Broken Earth
Peaceful scenery
Geese, rivers, plants & leaves
All trying to fit back together
in a beautiful vase

Scattered around
Torn apart
Colors blending
Purple, blue, green & burgundy

Slow down & stop
Smell the air
Feel the breeze
Listen & enjoy

Palm out
Trying to give back
Let's realize before it's too late
Our environment is worth it



A Mother's Fear

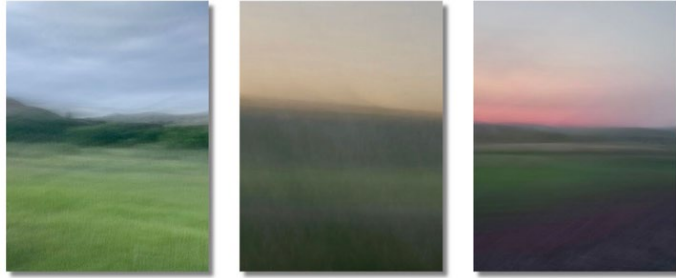
By Keri

The bright sky darkens
Tornadoes are near
A mother's fear
I wish I was near

Tornadoes are near
I hope you are safe
I wish I was near
Oh my daughter dear

I hope you are safe
How quickly the sky changes
Oh my daughter dear
When you answer your phone

How quickly the sky changes
A mother's fear
When you answer your phone
The dark sky brightens



Seasonal Abundance

By Marilyn

Yellow flowers splatter
Rose gold with olive green leaves
Leaves thrown from left to right
Explosion of paint & flowers

Rose gold with olive green leaves
Full of flaws, full of art, full of color
Explosion of paint & flowers
Inside of a beautiful heart

Fulls of flaws, full of color
Brokenness, explosion, destruction
Inside of a beautiful heart
Is what you see

Brokenness, explosion, destruction
Leaves thrown from left to right
Is what you see
Yellow flowers splatter



Boss Chick

By Fern

You can't understand how alone I feel
You can't understand
How I could have appeal
You never looked my way, through the town
When I was preening prideful as a peacock
You didn't hold my hand on my darkest night
And whether I'm a chicken or a rooster
Baby you know that's not right!
The grass is always greener
My amber eye looking meaner
We all do what we have to do
The reason I lie wherever I please
Is because I do one thing really well and I do it with ease
I may never have a love, a husband, a child
If you think like me those things are overrated, boring, reviled
"What is it?" you ask, "You unlovable shrew of a hen."
Gawking at my queen's majesty – tail of baby blue offset
with mustard golden.
Gold, gold I make jewel encrusted eggs of gold!
Look at my grandeur. I'm not a goose, you madwoman
I haven't started to squawk.
Nobody understands what it's like to be all alone
Nobody understands never to have the pleasure
To lose control
And if I could start again
I would lead with my heart not my head
And if I could start again
I would care nothing about precious metals, 'cept for lead
To finally be tethered to another upon this earth
What came first – the chicken, the egg?
I drop a few here, I drop a few there
Some people deserve 'em, and others beg
Seeing is believing
And believing is real



Known and Unknown

By Sky

Blue limbs winding and climbing up over my dread
An amalgam of ambiguous layers and shadows, callous
neon puddles of orgasmic euphoria
But I

Bleed
and bleed.

What's out there?
I can see a galaxy of emptiness and its familiar, courteous
beige smudge of benzodiazepine
My heart
floating in aquariums
of indecision.

A desert mirage or certain cessation?
Little branches of my past innocence sampling dark forces, corrupt
shoreline of felicity
My veins
ascending
and fading.

He menaces my uncertainty, smirks at the immutable past
An escalator into christ's body dissolved in my youthful mouth, cannibalism
from guts burrowed in fluorescent greed sucking its teeth
My eyes
only red sockets,
my own rose-colored glasses.

As ominous as the mouth of my high school tuba
I could emerge the clitoral sandpaper of his nightmares, calamitous
anatomical eject or a portal to eudemonia
My footing
failing
and falling forward.

The light is always less alluring than the dark.
The sunspots that own real estate on my memaw's kind hands, caring
gentle appendages decorating fried bread, all the equivocal dough out there I fear
Arms reflexively
raised
as my neck loses its strength.

Layers of tenuous sorrow that spit me into that equilateral tunnel into the black abyss



Belligerent and remorseful toe-curling finality, carefully
rotten whispers of pork rind breath or cantaloupe splashes
My Pollyanna head

 nested into the thigh gap

 I contemplated for years.

Sometimes what you know, even if it's all bad

Is better than what you don't, Circe

warned Odysseus about the sirens.

But he

 could never

 unhear the song.

Chained Bird

By Snoopy

They say chained birds can't fly
But what's a bird without wings
30,000 feet in the air, soaring freely through
the clouds above people, places and things
Escaping the chains that once clipped his flight
So that meant flying towards eternal life.
The chained bird wanders blissfully, curiously
Do I fight or flight
Or fight and flight
The chained bird chose freedom
So that meant flying towards an unshackled life
They say chained birds can't fly
But what's a bird without wings
as he ponders why society places barriers
on his goals of life
He decides to break every chain
So that meant flying towards a prosperous
Change
They say chained birds can't fly
But what's a bird without wings
A bird without wings don't dream
It stays stagnant becoming a statistic
in a sadistic world.
So this chained bird decides to dream
and realizes that life isn't what it seems
So that meant flying toward eternal life
They say that chained birds can't fly
But what's a bird without wings



Artists and Artworks in order of appearance

1. Nancy Moore, *Wonderment*
2. Nate Hill, *Untitled Study for Library Field*
3. Dyan Rosenberg, *Nature's Nectar*
4. Chad Crume, *Trunk on George's Island*
5. Chris Perry, *237 Ripples: ribbon(falls)*
6. Soli Pierce, *WY I, II, III (triptych)*
7. Nancy Moore, *Wonderment*
8. Crystal Marshall, *Wool V- Observer*
9. Tricia Caracappa, *What if?*
10. Soli Pierce, *WY I, II, III (triptych)*
11. Meg le Comte, *Unscripted in Chartreuse*
12. Soli Pierce, *WY I, II, III (triptych)*
13. Corinne Lapin-Cohen, *Seasonal Abundance-Part 2 of Cycle*
14. Ilene Schwartz-Montesinos, *Colorful Hen*
15. Nate Hill, *Untitled Study for Library Field*
16. Ilene Schwartz-Montesinos, *Colorful Hen*



Building Bridges: Prison Arts Initiative is made possible with support from Gail and Caesar Bryan.