

BILL ZAVATSKY

Any Poem

—for and after Ron Padgett

Isn't it funny
when you think of something
that might become a poem
but as usual you're too lazy
to scribble it down, even though
the little notebook you keep
for such moments
is well within reach (in your
shirt pocket) along with
your favorite ballpoint pen
which leaves such a gorgeous
stream of thick black ink
that it's almost a crime
not to pull out your notebook
and pen and get down on paper
a poem very much like this one
or something completely different

Bill Zavatsky lives in New York City, where he has taught a poetry workshop for the past eight years. He has received grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, two fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, and a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation.

PAUL GIBSON

Blue Still, 2022
Acrylic on linen, 36 x 48 in.



COURTESY THE STUDIO SHOP GALLERY

PAUL GIBSON

Purple Cups, 2022
Acrylic on linen, 48 x 36 in.



COURTESY THE STUDIO SHOP GALLERY

CHRISTINE STROUD

The Artist

We're all seeking the truth, I suppose.
He spends hours mixing and remixing paints,
no canvas, no single story is safe
from revision, of being over- or underwritten,
or told again, then again, then again.

We're all trying to be understood, I suppose.
But all interpretation becomes demeaning.
When the morning sunlight comes through the bedroom window,
it ruins everything. It translates nothing.

We're all trying to find our other, if there is such a thing.
But every time he tries to imagine, it's just a black canvas with
that single wound of blue. It doesn't mean anything, or it
does. Or it doesn't to the others.

He mixes again. He paints again. He's trying; I know.

Christine Stroud is a poet living in Pittsburgh and is the editor in chief of Autumn House Press. She has published two chapbooks, *Sister Suite* (Disorder Press, 2017) and *The Buried Return* (Finishing Line Press, 2014), and her poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Hobart*, the *Ninth Letter* online, *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Cimarron Review*, and many others as well as several anthologies, including *The Queer South: LGBTQ Writers on the American South*.

PAUL GIBSON

Side Cups, 2012
Acrylic on linen, 24 x 72 in.



COURTESY THE STUDIO SHOP GALLERY

ELIZABETH MCKENZIE

The Writing of *Booth*

An interview with
Karen Joy Fowler

At the Cowell Ranch Hay Barn on March 8, 2022, at an event hosted by Bookshop Santa Cruz and the Humanities Institute of the University of California, Santa Cruz, I spoke with Karen Joy Fowler about her masterful new novel, *Booth*. The novel covers the years 1822 to 1865, embedding the reader in the theatrical family of Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, and can be seen to ask the question: "What kind of family raises a man who shoots a president?" The Booth children fear that a streak of madness runs in their blood, and there's a streak of madness running through the narrative that Fowler captures in tone. The writing is taut and electrifying. Every paragraph holds an explosion of surprise. We see the young Booths grow up in a hothouse, but the divisive issues in the lead up to the Civil War are never far from hand. Fowler's novel is as much about this infamous family as it is the fraught history of the republic. —EM

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ELIZABETH MCKENZIE: What was it like distilling the enormous amount of information available on the Booths? And what of the biographer who, I've read, sent you boxes of source materials?

KAREN JOY FOWLER: These boxes were an incredible, unexpected gift. I do research for all my novels and my usual process is to read for about a year before I begin to write, sort of looking for the story, thinking about the story, seeing what material I will have out of which to make the story. So I was doing this reading; I was in that first year and I came across a fairly recent and truly wonderful biography on John Wilkes Booth called *Fortune's Fool*, by Terry Alford. I highly recommend this book. If you think, as some do, that my book does not explain John Wilkes Booth well enough, then this is the book you are looking for.

It's a meticulously footnoted book, a nonfiction book. And I was impressed with the scholarly detail, but there was a story in it that I had never . . . that I had yet to encounter anywhere else, and I couldn't find anywhere else, and it was mysteriously not footnoted. So I found Terry Alford's email and just sent him a question, "I'm very interested in this incident you described in your book. Can you tell me where the source for this story is?" And he emailed me