

The *Haiku* Foundation *HaikuNow!* International Haiku Contest 2011

*First Prize
Traditional
Category*

Indian summer
mother dyes her graying hair
the color of straw

Tom Painting (USA)



Judge's Comments:

It is no simple thing to ask English grammar and words to fit a form that emerged organically from a language as different as Japanese, while preserving also its essential gestures and spirit. What struck me in the haiku that stepped into first place is the grace and tact with which its outer-looking image carries its fragrant hayfield of complex meanings. To dye hair is an artificial, chosen, and human act, yet vanity lessens when it is placed next to Indian summer, in which the year itself, without effort or intention, seems also to step backward, toward some impossible, momentary stay. Human and non-human each alters our view of the other, in turn. The color-choice of "straw" holds this haiku's emotional fulcrum. Straw is straw—no matter the warmth of the year, no matter the gold of the Clairol's alchemy, it will not become again green standing grasses. Yet it too has its beauty. (I should perhaps make clear that I read the word "mother" in this haiku as meaning the poet's mother, and not a personification of "earth.")

Time is also—in a way beyond the season word's effect—at the heart of two other of these haiku. The scent of a cut pine is this moment's scent, and does not know if the tree it comes from is young or old; it frees the poet for its moment as well. The familiar cherry tree links and contrasts with our human experience of past and present by its own kinds of transience and recurrence.

The drip of snow melt navigates time differently—the present is infused with the present in this haiku, as it is also in the haiku of the pine's hanging droplets. Finally, I appreciated the freshness and playfulness of the haiku presenting the spring equinox as a capricious toddler—a playfulness that does not entirely disguise a sterner message, when considered closely, as is so often true in play, and in haiku.

— Jane Hirshfield

*Runners-Up
Traditional
Category*

trimming the old pine
my saw releases the scent
of childhood summers

Melissa Spurr (USA)

February thaw
the steady sound of snow melt
drips into my work

Deb Baker (USA)

vernal equinox
a toddler giving me toys
and taking them back

Christopher Patchel (USA)

the old neighborhood—
my cherry tree blossoming
on a stranger's lawn

Marion Alice Poirier (USA)

*Commended
Traditional
Category*

new gallery launch—
among all the art pieces
an open window

—Robert Naczas (Poland)

yesterday's high tide...
brief passages underlined
in a borrowed book

—Michele L. Harvey (USA)

airport waiting lounge
a casual yawn becomes
international

—Rafal Zabratynski (Poland)

alaskan village
aurora borealis
in every window

—Ernest J. Berry (New Zealand)

greyness on the moor
a little bit of blue sky
in the painter's beard

—Patrick Druart (France)

ornamental pine—
hanging from every needle
a droplet of rain

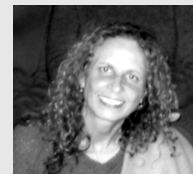
—Ida Freilingner (USA)

The *Haiku* Foundation *HaikuNow!* International Haiku Contest 2011

First Prize
Contemporary
Category

the river freezes . . .
silence is also
an answer

Francine Banwarth (USA)



Judge's Comments:

The Contemporary Category of any contest is the most difficult to judge, because it is likely to contain the best poems any particular event has to offer. The peculiarities of the other categories—special form, or innovation within that form—provide additional means by which those poems might be singled out. Not so with contemporary practice, which might indeed involve those special considerations, but which are not pre-eminent in evaluating them.

So it has proved, in my opinion, in this year's *HaikuNow!* Contemporary Category. I feel the top ten poems were quite close in merit, and choosing between them ultimately became a subjective act. So how did I choose? Ultimately on the basis of the strength of the emotion the words conveyed to me. My top prizewinner, penned by Francine Banwarth, contains a narrative element, certainly, but there is also a stop-motion strength to the image, which is easily recognizable for most of us. The manner in which the phrase element hinges in two ways is expertly handled, and each reading is equally compelling: one reading as the result of that narrative, but the other as its resolution. Nothing is wasted, and we are easily made present to the poem's truth.

The other selections have their own precisions. Along with its wonderful rhythm, Sandra Simpson's language choices call to mind the curiosities to be found in carnival side shows, the atrocities of war, the oddities of the museum, and our own perverse interests in all of these things. an'ya's acute noticing contains the same nonchalance she apprehends in her subject. C. R. Manley's winsome evocation of coming to self-knowledge is deftly anecdotal. And Peter Newton's interior voice is one we have all heard, loudly, and which requires our constant rejection. The notable others also have fine points to recommend them. In all, a strong and pleasing set of submissions, creating the kind of challenge any judge would wish to embrace.

— Jim Kacian

*Runners-Up
Contemporary
Category*

in the cabinet marked Mesopotamia a broken face

Sandra Simpson (New Zealand)

slowing traffic
the nonchalance
of a vulture

an'ya (USA)

rushing stream
my daughter asks to take
the steeper trail

C. R. Manley (USA)

too old
for tree forts
a voice inside

Peter Newton (USA)

*Commended
Contemporary
Category*

the professor explains
grains are fungible . . .
departing geese

—Scott Mason (USA)

Perseid meteor shower
bits of my childhood
linger

—Stephen A. Peters (USA)

broken branch—
an inner promise
to get in touch

—Colin Stewart Jones (Scotland)

finding a way into
the unfinished dream
winter fireflies

—Karen Cesar (USA)

lustre of pebbles
in the palm of the hand
a million years

—Andy Pomphrey (UK)

fog
the sound of ducks
floating away

—Daniel Gahnertz (Sweden)

the snow deepens . . .
a stack
of unopened mail

—Angela Terry (USA)

stillness . . .
the smoke of the volcano
at dawn

—Martina Sylvia Khamphasith (Laos)

The *Haiku* Foundation *HaikuNow!* International Haiku Contest 2011

First Prize
Innovative
Category

we turn turn our clocks ahead

Christopher Patchel (USA)



Judge's Comments:

Two kinds of poems dominated the submissions to the Innovative category this year: one we might call the “shape” poem wherein the content is re-enacted by the form of the poem; and the second we might term the “language” poem, where the experience conveyed is one conjured by the way words interact, more than any attempt at a natural correlative. These would represent the more common practices of current innovation (if we may so speak) in English-language haiku, and we would expect them to be so represented. So what a judge might be looking for here would not be anything radically new, but rather how well poets realized their conceptions of the current phase of haiku experimentation.

My top selection does a bit of both, and does so so simply and quietly that it's easy to overlook it. Christopher Patchel's almost slight one-liner is behind us almost before we realize how profoundly it realizes its goal. His repetition of the verb recapitulates the action described, so simply that it might strike us as a typo. At the same time, the psychological slippage so enacted creates a space wherein we can muse on exactly such a slippage, on the way our sense of time reverberates in us. We also must confront the arbitrariness of the purposes to which we use time—in fact, what we are doing with clock time bears a rather strange relationship with anything we might conceive of time being in the abstract, that it be so malleable that we can shift it to our pleasure and need. This poem not only arrested me—stopped time for me—but continued to bear fruit the more time I gave it.

There were other strong contenders as well. Willy Cuverlier's scattering of marbles is one of the best examples of what we might term a “typography” poem, first explored in haiku in the 1970s and largely abandoned. Similarly, Rafal Zabratynski's offering enacts its content notably well. In these two offerings, the shapes are the poems, and the mere rendering of their words would seem, by comparison, quite flat.

Seneca Kennedy's submission operates more in the second sphere suggested above: it is a poem wherein the language (and our stored expectations of it) create the *frisson* of its interest. The manner in which the compulsion of the subject is noted is sneaked into a trope that might be recognized as our own compulsion, or the compulsion of early education. Quite different than any of the others, Nan Dozier's offering might be called an “array,” and such entries were quite few. This one works particularly well, storing energy on either side of the vertical axis, which is permeable, and so the one side plays against the other with a kind of osmotic energy.

Among the other notables we have haiga, rebus, other typographical effects, all of which suggest a non-linear striving towards the rendering of poetic meaning, and which promises the genre will continue to challenge its limits and remain vital.

—Jim Kacian

Runners-Up
Innovative
Category

the poor boy
s l y n m r l s
i p a i g a b e
a l o n e

Willy Cuvelier (Belgium)

abcdefg
ADHD
lmnop

THE

Seneca Kennedy (USA)

through
— the
ning win mu cal
mor dow the sic school vo
spring of the mu warm-
up

Rafal Zabratynski (Poland)

red
| brick
| house
no bud yet
memory |
| tree
for mom

Nan Dozier (USA)

Commended

Innovative

Category

peacock
a thousand eyes till confession

—Carolyn Rohrig (USA)

words
splashing
the ocean
—Zeljko Funda (Croatia)

fireworks at twilight forsythia
—Kathe L. Palka (USA)

mortuary shelf—
bo people xes
nobody claimed
—Kathy Lippard Cobb (USA)

red-eye:
row by row
we slip
into
the angle
of
r e p o s e
—Kate McQueen (USA)

midw1nter
f
out
o
the door
—Colin Stewart Jones (Scotland)

cobweb filling the corners
gossip

—Razvan Pinteana (Romania)

white far-away ship
toy between sky and sea
—Gordana Radovanovic
(Bosnia and Herzegovina)

another bottle the birthday empty
—John Soules (Canada)

Standing naked
in a blizzard and thankful
for my cup of tea
—Bruce England (USA)

all night
thud of
ripe apples
at the
u
n
i
verse's
core
—paul m. (USA)

after
noon flow
ers

the butter
fly, heart

of a lit
tle boy

—Chad Lee Robinson

*Commended
Innovative
Category*

acockroach every knot in this pine floor

—Marilyn Appl Walker (USA)

in the salt breeze a memory of speechlessness

—Eve Luckring (USA)

Afershocks
the three words
of Kürnberger

—Patrick Sweeney (Japan)

What lies
between happiness
16, 14, 12

—Kate Prendergast (Australia)

caterpillars
transforming

l
l s
i i
h d
a e

—Andrew Shattuck McBride(USA))

A voice in this cave
says a voice in this cave says
a voice in this cave

—Kaitlyn Garr (USA)

wintering each absence an ice-blue accretion

—Lorin Ford (Australia)

down here in different dark hard tracks

—Clare McCotter (Ireland)

chessmen

at dusk

White

concedes

—Scott Mason (USA)



—Robert Perret (USA)

The *Haiku* Foundation *HaikuNow!* International Haiku Contest 2010

Judges:

Jane Hirshfield
Jim Kacian

Screeners:

Cherie Hunter Day (Traditional)
Olga Dugan (Innovative)
Lorin Ford (Contemporary)

Coordinator:

Laura Sherman