

Seattle City Council

Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Arts Committee Meeting

Tuesday, 2PM, June 7, 2005

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Anna Maria Hong & Grant Cogswell**

Today's Curator is Anna Maria Hong and her poet is **Erin Malone**

Erin Malone received her M.F.A. from the University of Washington in 1996. She's won several awards for her poetry, including an Academy of American Poets' Prize and a literary fellowship from the Colorado Council on the Arts. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Poetry Northwest, The North American Review, New Orleans Review, West Branch, and FIELD, among other journals. She taught creative writing at the University of Colorado and in the Writers' Program at the University of Washington Extension, and currently serves as associate editor for the literary journal Cranky. She lives in Seattle with her husband, novelist Shawn Wong, and their young son, Peter.

Hush

by Erin Malone

I lie & say there are no ghosts
when sleep's stalled current draws him
near our bed, hair magnetized, shock
on blanket & pajamas in the too-dry air.
I could pat him, turn him toward the door,
but he has handfuls of language spilling—
owl, moon, hoot—& just then a train

loans its lonely sound to the fences
of our neighborhood. And that sound
like sand is everywhere. We've tried to show him

the world straight up, from carrots pulled
to the crow at the peak of the roof. He loves
winter banana apples for their pocked
rocky looks, twirled stems, & steelhead
when they barge upstream, teeming,
glitter-coated. He doesn't know

what comes next. He opened cabinets,
a kitchen drawer, found ghost—& shook
the word loose, shook it till he held it.
No, I say, but he has it & it's his.

~

New windows. New floors over old.
Walls punched in, sockets moved
wires hidden underground. Finished
twice, three times—isn't the house ours now,
nothing before we hung the beaded lamp,
woodcuts, the mirror in its copper frame?
Our present fresh as paint. For years

I inhabited someone else's space.
I've had enough: of lowered voices: bells
rung: all that held & holds us
down. I want to float. So when our son

comes in afraid, I shoulder him to bed,
drop in the shell of his listening ear

Horses have hands, houses have footprints.
Wind sings. Night falls like rain
& leaves.

Anniversary by Erin Malone

You're the icing. I'm the swarm of candles
on my cake. It's my birthday. Bring me an island.

I'm like an atlas: Impossible to find Delaware.
Beware my small moods. Beware.

I cover my eyes. I know what's coming.
Don't look. Will you look at what's coming?

Around the bend. Some wilderness I part
with a jackknife dive. You on the banks in the dark.

Your voice weaves through my five belt loops.
Air changes angles when you haul me up.

As angels dangle from pulleys in a play:
Something hangs over us, always.

I replace the roof shingle by shingle.
You keep rain off, tap gutters when they're full.

There's too much. There's not enough.
You say, just the right amount in every bowl & cup.

Bad at math, I'm dumb as a bell, clumsy.
But rapt. On the tag mark X and X. An O for me.

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