

Seattle City Council

Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Arts Committee Meeting
Friday, 2PM, July 8, 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 **Martha Silano**.

Martha Silano received her BA from Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa and began studying poetry with David Wagoner and Heather McHugh at the UW, where she received her MFA in 1993. Her first book, *What the Truth Tastes Like*, won the William & Kingman Page Poetry Book Award and was published in 1999 by Nightshade Press. She's had poems in the *Paris Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, and on *Poetry Daily*, among others, and has work forthcoming in the Contemporary Northwest Poets anthology. Her unpublished 2nd manuscript has been a National Poetry Series finalist. She has received funding from the Seattle Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs and has been nominated twice for a Pushcart prize. Martha teaches English at Edmonds and Bellevue Community Colleges and as a mentor through the Scribes program at Seattle's Richard Hugo House.

My Newborn's

by Martha Silano

diurnal, definitely diurnal,
with no interest in the phases

of the moon, in the nocturnally
lucent night blooming cereus.

She's attentive, very attentive,
to the richness of seeds,

to miscommunications, confusing
what's eaten with butter and jam

with "cat fight" (*crepe chignon*), attuned
to the tricks of jewelweed. She's

most capable of metamorphosis,
as are ladles, swing sets, spathes.

In relation to me she's always skyward,
skyward like the popcorn flower and the trillium.

Her tongue, both tibias, hail from the era
of Rosie the Riveter, women named Garnet

and Hazel. She's fire, all fire, but also
tending toward cymose, cymose and lacy,

most fashionably a relative
of the crepuscular thick-knees. To be

beautiful on a dissecting table,
all she needs is a dung-rolling scarab

pinned to her pink and white onesie:
her gait will be my gait.

His Favorite Color is Green

by Martha Silano

All shades all permutations
of say the shiny glabrous stem
of a shooting-out-from-winter daffodil
of Astroturf like just-before-blooming phlox

the long-&-narrow-little-or-large-town street sign
the big square Missoula Sioux City Throgsneck Bridge
along the freeway with horsetail astragalus vetch

the Libyan flag whipping over one point oh
three percent arable land
shimmer of mallard's head

or lighter . . . the under-ripe fruit
he does his best to enjoy
olivaceousness of kinglets
mama calliope warming her eggs
those clusters that fall in April or May
from Norway maples onto sidewalks
we stroller past
custard of scooped out avocado

or dark as say its skin . . . seaweed hemlock

dinosaur kale . . .picnic tables of city parks

The vegetables he hates
The garbage trucks he loves

The semi-spicate the glume-ful the spikelike the membranous
The shallowly bifid the twisted the sticky the hollow
The most common & palatable known
from near Corvallis from near Boise
Whorlwort Beckmannia False Brome

His world's frondy
Maidenhair gone haywire
His world's licorice wet (also deer & lady)
His world's hickory buckeye slippery elm

I kneel to find him something emerald
something emerald & squiggly

I hardly knew him that first spring he fit in a playground swing
ratcheting a metal bar along a chain
down & down till it fit

So much of his world so much of this world
even where plowed where fires even in cities
a hispid persistence

I wanted him to come along but he wouldn't
I wanted him to hurry
I needed to tell him what Horace said
about the goddess Envy
("leave no offerings")

Piles of clippings giant piles of invasive ivy
the neighbor's ghost-shaped shrubs harmless giants
while he sings his crocodile song

- end -