

Seattle City Council

Culture, Civil Rights, Health, and Personnel Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 2:00 PM, September 10th, 2008

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **John Burgess**

Today's poet is **Lana Hechtman Ayers**

Lana Hechtman Ayers, grew up in New York City and spent over a decade in New England before making her move to the Seattle area three years ago. She is a Hedgebook alum, poetry editor of the twenty-five-year-old Seattle-based literary journal *Crab Creek Review* and co-curator of two poetry reading series on the east side. She has three published collections, *Love is a Weed*, *Dance From Inside My Bones* that was a National Book Award nominee and won the Hass Award, and *Chicken Farmer I Still Love You*, which won the D-N National Poetry Manuscript Competition. Her poems appear in such local magazines as *Seattle Woman*, *Centrifugal Eye* and *StringTown*. Lana runs *Concrete Wolf*, her own small chapbook press, facilitates writing workshops at conferences such as Centrum Port Townsend, and is a professional manuscript consultant. She enjoys sushi, gray days and anything by Miles Davis.

To The Art Teacher

by Lana Hechtman Ayers

*"...and no whiteness (lost) is so white as the memory
of whiteness"* —William Carlos Williams

You ask me to sketch wind,
paint laughter,
draw ambition.

You might as well ask me to capture time
with a butterfly net,
trap it in a mayonnaise jar.

I don't think in brushstrokes.

When I sleep, my hands are not unconsciously
shaping *death* from terracotta clay.

All I know are words.

I can tell you what yellow tastes like in soup,
the way red smells in the morning,

how blue feels against your skin.

I can rhyme the song of green.

I write the word “apple”

and you begin to wonder,

Macintosh or Golden Delicious.

You imagine the smooth ball of apple

in your right hand, roll it around,

bring it up to your mouth as if for a kiss,

crisp it between your front teeth.

This is how far you can go with words,

the saying of them, setting them free

to fly inside your chest like bees

searching for flowers to make honey.

Tell me, is there a way to pollinate with paint,

can I take this white page,

apply colors, to give you what you ask,

this dream with no words

and teeth of rain?

-- *end* --

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