

Seattle City Council

Culture, Civil Rights, Health and Personnel Committee Meeting

2:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 27th, 2009

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Donna Miscolta**

Today's poet is **Molly Tenenbaum**

Molly Tenenbaum is the author of *Now* (Bear Star Press, 2007), *By a Thread* (Van West & Co, 2000), and of the chapbooks *Blue Willow*, *Old Voile*, and *Story*. She's also a musician, and plays old-time stringband music with The Queen City Bulldogs, whose anagram names are Yodeling Quest Club and Obliquely Decent Thugs. Her old-time banjo CD is *Instead of a Pony*. She has visited Seattle many times as a child, since her grandmother lived here, and has lived in Seattle herself since 1981—in Ballard, Crown Hill, White Center—when she lived in White Center, she commuted via the viaduct sometimes more than once a day—and lower and upper Ravenna. She currently lives in Ravenna and bicycles to teach at North Seattle Community College. Things she loves about Seattle: The Farmer's Markets, Elliott Bay Book Company, Open Books: A Poem Emporium, one of only two all-poetry bookstores in the United States (the other one is in Cambridge), the old-time music community, the library system, the University of Washington, the arboretum, Golden Gardens, Lincoln Park, Ravenna Park, and Seward Park, The Seattle Art Museum, and the fact that we can now recycle plastic plant pots.

My Metal Civilization

by Molly Tenenbaum

The walls are made of every metal art.
Braidings of rose-yellow gold,
sweeps of brushed pewter,
feather-fine chasings,
garlands of galloping iron.

And overwrought with decoration.
Ormolu fleur-de-lis, spirals of burnished brass dots,
fluted lead, copper leaf shirrings, panels in bronze
of fruits and flowers.

Inset with every color and shape.
Opal carbuncles, agate intaglio, lacings
of kingfisher jade, columns
of mutton-fat jade, swirls
dotted garnet, each stone
smaller than a flea.

And lapped behind hammered roses,

leafed over by beaten bronze laurel,
are hundreds of doors.

Some like pin tips,
so small you can't see them,
some so leviathan-huge you can't see them.
Some under the paw of a bronze relief leopard,
some in the laugh of a bronze relief monkey,
some wound around with shining vines,
but all you see are the vines,

in each wall, thousands of doors.
And for every one you find
thousands more are hidden,
and for every one you open,
thousands more hinges sleep folded.

The walls glow in flickers,
deep black in the creases, no doors
to be seen, and maybe you haven't
opened a one, for all that you've opened,
not one at all.

Slumber now, here in the corner.
Here is your pallet of straw,
here your warm patchwork cover.
Your mother sewed it herself
of what spilled from
her hamper of rags.

-- end --