

...Oh, we've come so far  
but have yet so far to go,  
but hey this isn't a secret  
it's something we all know...  
and still I rise  
Like the phoenix being rebirth  
from the ashes of its own dem  
still still still I rise.

- Phoenix Nastasha Ru

# TRANSART

**A Celebration of Transgender Talent,  
Vision and Possibilities  
June 11 - July 12, 2015  
Miami Beach**

**Illuminated Poetry Program  
B Bar at The Betsy  
Program Opening June 15, 2015**

**The poems, poem fragments, and artwork used in this chapbook are presented for educational use only. This collection is not for sale and is presented by The Betsy - South Beach as part of our cultural programming.**

## A Welcome from Program Partners



"The Betsy is proud to present TransArt Miami with Unity Coalition. Our programs are committed to inclusivity - to embracing and letting them know they are welcome at our hotel. Believing, as we do, in the power of the arts to bring people together fuels so much of what we do, and (again in this case) inspires us to believe that TransArt will provide a seamless way for South Miami to understand the challenges and realities of transgender life in America in 2015."

Jonathan Plutzik, Chairman, The Betsy Hotel



" We are thrilled to be showcasing so much incredible talent at TRANSART. The response was incredible, literally from across the world. Artwork, Written Word, Documentaries, Theatre, Fashion... there is so much Talent, Passion & Possibilities in the transgender Community. I am proud of my community, Unity Coalition|Coalicion Unida, the LGBT Center and the BETSY South Beach, for having the vision and commitment to make this event a reality."

ARYAH LESTER, director TransMiami & Unity Coalition|Coalicion Unida Board Member



"The Transgender community was there from the start, almost 50 years ago at Stonewall, demanding respect and leading the way for the Rights and Freedoms that we as the LGB&T community benefit from today. Unity Coalition|Coalicion Unida's commitment to our Trans Sisters & Brothers has been there from day one in 2002 when we started, and I could not be prouder to be presenting this amazing collection of Talent and Art, along with the BETSY, TransMiami & the LGBT Center. We are already planning our 2016 TRANSART events!"

Herb Sosa, Director Unity Coalition|Coalicion Unida



## **Catalogue Content Summary**

We're proud to present the words and imagery of creators whose work inspires us to better understand the unique and personal experiences of those that are transgender.

These works encompass the content for a presentation of illuminated words and images at The Betsy-South Beach, with a public opening scheduled for June 15, 2015. It is presented here as an educational companion to the live experience, offering viewers a chance to reflect deeply and personally on the content.

Documentation of the presentation will be posted on the web. We encourage you to visit [betsywritersroom.com](http://betsywritersroom.com), [thebetsyhotel.com](http://thebetsyhotel.com), and [unitycoalition.org](http://unitycoalition.org) to find the digital archive.

Our lives are like  
A little dance.  
You step, I step  
As if we both  
Could hear some kind  
Of silent noise.

- *Cat Fitzpatrick*

**Cat Fitzpatrick** convenes the Trans Poets Workshop NYC, teaches English Literature at Rutgers University-Newark, and is the poetry editor at Topside Press. She is responsible for the trans poetry zines *At Least It's Short* and *You Have Ripped Your Dick Off* and has published work in venues like *Asylum* and *Glitterwolf*. Her twitter handle is @intermittentcat.

## **BON-BONS**

### **'sticky and sweet'**

*Cat Fitzpatrick*

No money left.  
I have no gifts,  
except for this:  
These words that fall  
So easily  
Out of my mouth.

\*

The way you smell.  
Never too much.  
Instead of fate  
I might believe  
In this. Like milk,  
Like earth, like grass.

\*

Our lives are like  
A little dance.  
You step, I step  
As if we both  
Could hear some kind  
Of silent noise.

\*

Those games we play  
Where you convince  
Me things are true  
That aren't make me  
So happy that  
I don't know what.

\*

The summer heat  
Keeps you inside  
But I go out.  
Don't worry, love.  
I still intend  
To come back in.

\*

I like it when  
We take our clothes  
Off and have sex.  
I was afraid  
But now I think  
That it's alright.

\*

I do get lost  
Inside my moods;  
Get sad, get wild.  
But if I find  
Some constancy  
It will be yours.

\*

You concentrate  
So hard on things.  
It makes you sweet.  
Even your rage  
Fills my heart  
With tenderness.

\*

How can it be  
That I always  
Want more of you?  
Are you holding  
Something back?  
Or is it me?

\*

Our bodies are  
Peculiar.  
We made ourselves  
Into a pair.  
The best we could  
With what we had.

\*

Please take my head  
Into the place,  
Beside your breasts,  
Beneath your arm,  
And hold me there  
Until I move.

\*

The way you love  
Me is so good.  
I know that you  
Prefer it when  
I am direct.  
So here, I tried.

# **Kate Weakley**

Dissociation

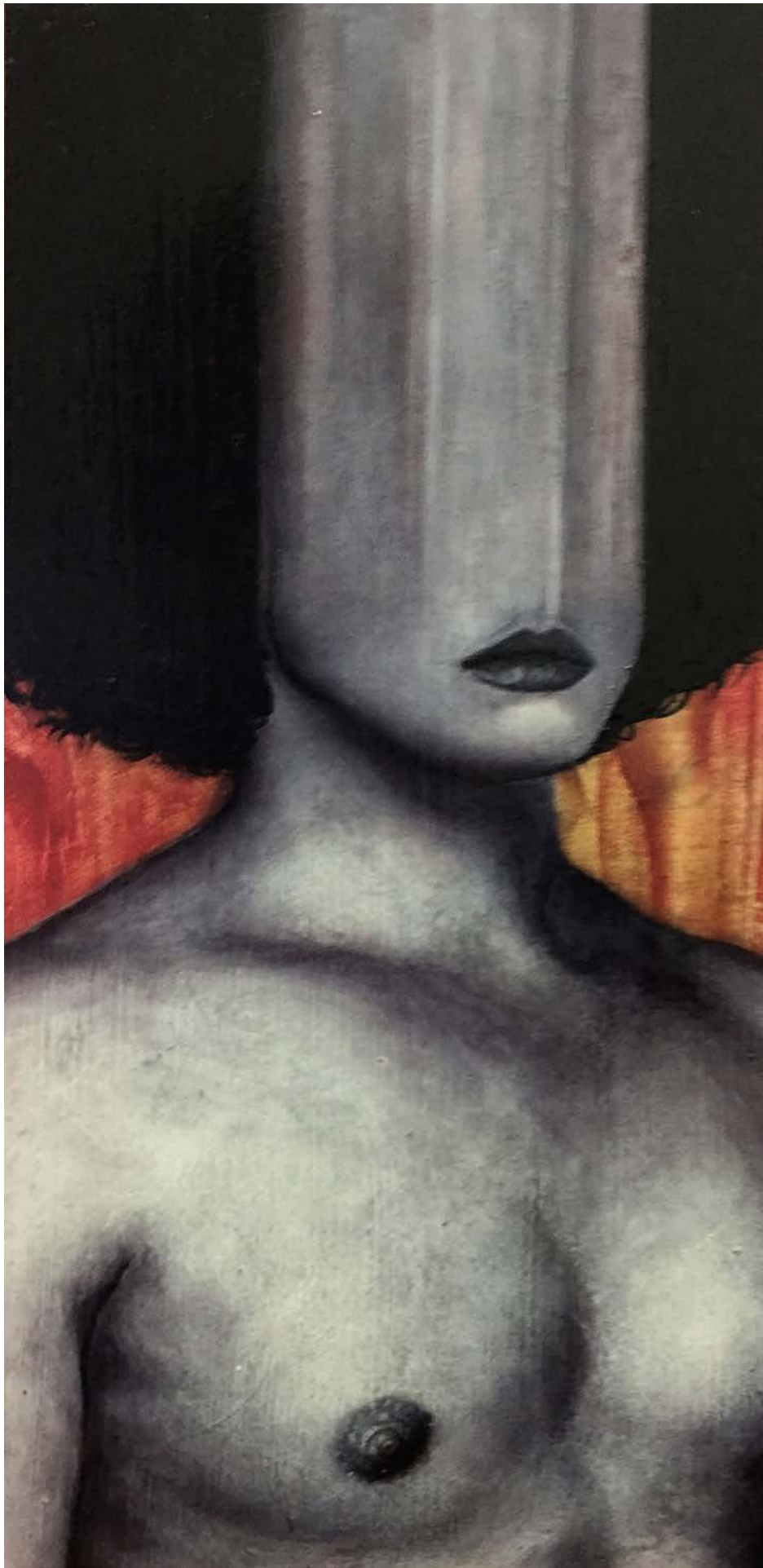
2014. oil on canvas, 14" x 11"

## **Artist Statement:**

My current work incorporates my experiences as a transgender individual. On a personal level, I use myself as a subject matter to depict the changes I've experienced both physical and mentally as I go through my transition. On a broader level, I explore issues related to gender, sexuality, masculinity, and femininity through observation and objective analysis from my varying perspectives as a previously identified heterosexual male, a currently identified homosexual female, and as a transgender individual.

What I hope to achieve with my art is to create a body of work that allows a cisgender, hetero-normative audience to experience art with a transgender narrative in way that is approachable and relatable.





Imagine this world is the world  
we were born into.  
All soft and careless.

- *Francisco Salas Pérez*

**Francisco Salas Pérez** is a two-spirit writer based in Brooklyn and Mexico, studying human-computer interaction at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Their academic and creative work focuses on indigeneity, queerness, violence, and science fiction. They are currently completing their first book of poetry.

## UNTITLED (CROWN HEIGHTS, 16 FEBRUARY)

*Francisco Salas Pérez*

It's snowing outside. Looks

like Venus in a movie—like the  
planetoid from *Alien*,

the comic book  
adaptation by Dark Horse

in the late eighties. You  
know what I mean.

All blue and lavender. All  
black and mauve.

Imagine this world  
is the world

we were born  
into. All  
soft and careless.

All flesh, all organs. All  
eyes and

ears and  
mouths absorbing

the same atmospheric gases  
as the monsters

who will one day come,  
identify

the weaknesses of our compound  
and so swiftly

and  
exuberantly consume us.

The shadow came upon her  
once again:  
she was not like them.

- *Aryah Lester*

**Aryah Lester**, speaker/author/educator, is the founder of Trans-Miami. She is also an aspiring writer and board member of Unity Coalition.

## **The Lady and the Shadow**

*Aryah Lester*

The shadow came upon her once again: she was not like them.  
The fact was pushed into the very depths of her mind,  
While she stood by,  
Lived and loved.  
For years she watched and learned,  
Throughout it all forming a bond  
With those around her.  
Their souls' pleas for help were like  
Trumpets in her ears, not to go unnoticed.  
For eternity she assisted  
And subjugated herself to others,  
Sacrificing that which she borrowed to further the lives of others.  
Yet she was not like them:  
That which she gave was solely dispensable to her alone.  
The trappings of desire and necessity  
Bent their will around hers,  
Giving her the strength needed to fortify the lines of future.  
The shadow loomed over her once again,  
Threatening to consume all parts of her.  
When there was no more to give, no work to be done,  
The shadow will destroy her.  
Yet she was so very tired; even her will had its limits.  
Her body was rippling with exhaustion and her mind grew weary with overuse.  
She was becoming desperate:  
Her Compliment had yet to appear and announce himself to ease her burdens.  
She feared that he would arrive too late,  
Finding the husk that had once contained her ancient spirit.

(I am not my father's son)

He wanted softball.  
I gave him jump rope.

- *Y'señia Almaguer*

**Y'señia Almaguer** is one of Miami's newest emerging writers. Her work is profound, powerful, and honest. She attended Jan Becker's (Reading Queer) Seminar and found her voice in writing, "I'm not My Father's Son".

## **(I'm not my fathers Son )**

*Y'señia Almaguer*

I am not my father son . He wanted Macho he got Mujer ,.... The complete opposite . To him I was the opposition of life .... Death !

He wanted softball , . . . I gave him jump rope.. Jumping toward the sky in hopes ... But no hope.

He wanted tough I , I gave him sissy . He wanted balled -up Fists , I gave him broken Wrists .

Him ,... Ashamed as they commented “ Tu hijo es Un Marcion “. He was torn . Which team should he pitch for them or me ?

The dreams he had for his son ... Broken . Dreams that will never be ... Because his son was infested with a disease called Transsexuality .

To Him I was cursed ,... For me it was Freedom .

A Freedom I wanted to experience , but at what cost ? How will I pay ? ..... I payed !  
The scars I have on my flesh , the fingerprints Of those who've trespassed against me and took my innocence At that tender age ... That's my Receipt ,.... My proof

I Yearn to be that woman I was not born as but felt it through every fiber of my existence.

“I'm not the Son You wanted .... I'm a girl !! I yelled . He froze . No more words were uttered , just his tears spoke .

Nothing can be said nor can anything be done ... To bring back This Fathers son

His son is buried along-side his fathers shame, .... Only to be resurrected as His Daughter who will carry on her Father's name.

Mommy, that man is a girl,  
says the boy  
pointing his finger,  
like a narrow spotlight,  
targeting the center of my back,  
his kid-hand  
learning to assert what he sees,  
his kid-hand  
learning the failure of gender's  
tidy little story about itself.

- *Stacey Waite*

**Stacie Waite** is the author of three collections of poems: *Choke* (winner of the 2004 Frank O'Hara Prize), *Love Poem to Androgyny* (Main Street Rag, 2007), and *the lake has no saint* (winner of Tupelo's 2008 Snowbound Chapbook Award). With both an M.F.A. in poetry and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Pittsburgh, Waite now teaches courses in writing, gender studies, and pedagogy as an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln.



## **The Kind of Man I Am at the DMV**

*Stacey Waite*

Mommy, that man is a girl, says the boy  
pointing his finger, like a narrow spotlight,  
targeting the center of my back, his kid-hand  
learning to assert what he sees, his kid-hand  
learning the failure of gender's tidy little story  
about itself. I try not to look at him

because, yes, that man is a girl. I, man, am a girl.  
I am the kind of man who is a girl, and because  
the kind of man I am is patient with children,  
I try not to hear the meanness in his voice,  
his boy-voice that sounds like a girl-voice  
because his boy-voice is young and pitched high  
like the tent in his pants will be years later  
because he will grow to be the kind of man  
who is a man, or so his mother thinks.

His mother snatches his finger from the air.  
Of course he's not, she says, pulling him back  
to his seat. What number does it say we are?  
she says to her boy, bringing his attention  
to numbers, to counting and its solid sense.

But he has earrings, the boy complains,  
now sounding desperate, like he's been  
the boy who cried wolf, like he's been  
the hub of disbelief before. But this time  
he knows he is oh-so-right. The kind  
of man I am is a girl, the kind of man  
I am is pushups-on-the-basement-floor,  
is chest-bound-tight-against-himself,  
is thick-gripping-hands-to-the-wheel  
when the kind of man I am drives away  
from the boy who will become a boy,  
except for now, while he's still a girl-voice,  
a girl-face, a hairless arm, a powerless hand.  
That boy is a girl, that man who is a girl  
thinks to himself as he pulls out of the lot,  
his girl eyes shining in the Midwest sun.

Somewhere between male  
and female the soul lives unstirred  
by the memory of childhood.

- *Neil de la Flor*

**Neil de la Flor** is a writer, teacher and photographer. He is also the co-recipient of a 2012 Knight Arts Challenge Grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to found “Reading Queer”, a new annual literary event to promote Miami as a center for LGBTIQ literature. He holds a MFA from the University of Miami where he was a James A. Michener Fellow.

## **SHIVA**

*Neil de la Flor*

Somewhere between male and female the soul lives unstirred by the memory of childhood. Somewhere between the Destroyer of Obstacles and the Goddess of Fortune the soul lives in a state of constant hip hop guided by a white flashlight. Somewhere between now and now the soul lives possessed by the certainty that it is always in transition and will always live in between the present and the present. Somewhere between Terminal 2 and Terminal 3 the soul lives in a million humans who will pass through life in the third person. Somewhere between the Real Shiva and the Statue of Shiva on display at the Art Institute of Chicago the soul lives in every person. In between the clowns and grapefruits. In between the yellow bus driver and the happy waiter. In between the zoo and the opera house. Between life and death. The soul lives light as a father. Or feather.

We grow in waves,  
effluvia fading ...

The first season, we had no flowers;  
from then on, we bloomed;  
We are irises.

- *Mya Adriene Byrne*

**Mya Adriene Byrne** is a poet, multi-instrumentalist, award-winning singer-songwriter, and a proud transgender woman. She released her debut solo LP in the fall of 2012 and is currently mixing her second full-length record and preparing her first collection of poetry. Find Mya online at [www.myabyrne.com](http://www.myabyrne.com), [www.soundcloud.com/myabyrne](http://www.soundcloud.com/myabyrne), or [@myadriene](https://twitter.com/myadriene).

## **IRISES**

*Mya Adriene Byrne*

We are irises:

When true sun strikes us,  
so quickly we blossom our fragile, curved petals,  
our veins newly hewn  
under transparent ghostflesh.

We grow in waves,  
effluvia fading,  
as our last remains fall  
to a field of hidden rhizome; we are irises,  
and find others growing beside us, begging the question:  
Were we intended to complement  
each other's delicate spirals?

As we emerge from what could be mistaken  
as common grass?

The first season, we had no flowers; from then on, we bloomed;  
We are irises.

Violet and buttercup colors,  
enrobed by soft vellus,  
complete in our dissymmetry;  
inflorescence, blossoming symphony,  
breathing life from the most poisoned dirt,  
climbing any fences without trellis,  
so quickly evolving in the satin spring.

My words only come out  
in brutal tenderness  
or tender brutality

- *Andy 'Rocket' Izenson*

**Andy “Rocket” Izenson** is a trans\*human genderqueer event planner, poet, attorney, and activist, previously published by 24 Magazine, Sibling Rivalry Press, Sock Drawer Press, and the Yes Means Yes blog. They are likely of extraterrestrial origin and they miss their chosen family.

## **LESS THAN THREE**

*Andy "Rocket" Izenson*

Only my heart is left in New York.

If you trace your finger along my arteries – here – here –  
you'll see they are splayed out along the telephone wires  
from Maine to Ishikawa,  
tangled with the highways that pump from  
western Massachusetts to Kentucky -  
feel, here, where my nervous system is saturated  
with the exhaust of endless commuting kisses,  
exes and ohs, lesses than threes, colon-dash-asterisks,  
that you can – almost – feel on your lips.

We don't know how to be family. We certainly don't know  
how to fit words like "I love you" in the shapes of our mouths.  
It sounds like something someone else would say,  
someone who knows how to be held close or kissed without violence.  
I know what your cheek feels like against my eyelid but not how to be your brother.  
I know what you look like just before you cry  
but not how to make you stop.

My words only come out in brutal tenderness or tender brutality  
because I have never wanted to be fucked but  
the only tokens I know how to give are unwanted  
and dripping with gore. I wish I could give you more.

My loves, I feel your distance like dry retching.  
There is a hook in each chamber of my heart and  
my blood vessels are twined intimate as ivy around the wires that lead  
from my wrenched guts to your fingertips, twanging taut lines of longing across the  
globe,  
I feel your every movement in the ripples that move through  
the nest of razor wire inside my skin – if only I could loosen the knot by touching you  
–  
if only I could feel the knobs of your spine with my hand –  
but rather I am the sounding board of a cruel harp, I am the sound,  
I can touch the wires that thrum across the miles between us,  
pluck at them with bloody fingers,  
make of this a song.

This app is way more drama  
than shazam...  
My lover blocked me on instagram

- *Buzz Slutsky*

**Buzz Slutsky** is an interdisciplinary visual artist, writer, and performer. Buzz's work has been shown at the Leslie-Lohman Museum, La Mama's SQUIRTS: New Voices in Queer Performance, Frameline37 International LGBT Film Festival, and the The MIX NYC Queer Experimental Film Festival.



## THE POET DOTH PROCESS TOO MUCH

*Buzz Slutsky*

My lover blocked me on instagram.  
Too much Gemini; it was bound to combust.  
Every decision was heavy, a final exam,

but we drew close like magnets, such fire, hot damn.  
Their sleeping was rough; with their binder they fussed.  
My job was to comfort like a cuddly lamb.

They were smaller and younger than I am—  
Nervous in bed, too fragile to thrust.  
One time, late at 3:30am,

My lover froze up and asked me to scram.  
They spoke real confusing, like through tin cans caked in rust;  
But they sent pensive selfies, a millennial ham.

Their boyish outfits so fresh, so glam.  
Silence might help temper our magnetic lust.  
Maybe that's why my lover blocked me on instagram,

where they posted snapshots of their fam.  
No more pictures of their pizza crust  
which probably won't be topped with ham.

My other ex just sent me spam.  
while I was in Oakland, their turf. I will delete it if I must.  
But my new ex-lover blocked me on instagram.

They'll prolly date some butch named Sam  
who meets their needs of care and trust  
and takes coupley selfies like a fake-happy ham.

This app is way more drama than shazam.  
Even my phone needs to adjust.  
My lover blocked me on instagram,  
And I'm hanging on their lips, in front of you, like a desperate ham.

She feared that he would  
arrive too late,  
Finding the husk that had once  
contained her ancient spirit.

- *Aryah Lester*

**Aryah Lester**, speaker/author/educator, is the founder of Trans-Miami.  
She is also an aspiring writer and board member of Unity Coalition.

## **The Lady and the Shadow**

*Aryah Lester*

The shadow came upon her once again: she was not like them.  
The fact was pushed into the very depths of her mind,  
While she stood by,  
Lived and loved.  
For years she watched and learned,  
Throughout it all forming a bond  
With those around her.  
Their souls' pleas for help were like  
Trumpets in her ears, not to go unnoticed.  
For eternity she assisted  
And subjugated herself to others,  
Sacrificing that which she borrowed to further the lives of others.  
Yet she was not like them:  
That which she gave was solely dispensable to her alone.  
The trappings of desire and necessity  
Bent their will around hers,  
Giving her the strength needed to fortify the lines of future.  
The shadow loomed over her once again,  
Threatening to consume all parts of her.  
When there was no more to give, no work to be done,  
The shadow will destroy her.  
Yet she was so very tired; even her will had its limits.  
Her body was rippling with exhaustion and her mind grew weary with overuse.  
She was becoming desperate:  
Her Compliment had yet to appear and announce himself to ease her burdens.  
She feared that he would arrive too late,  
Finding the husk that had once contained her ancient spirit.

...Oh, we've come so far  
but have yet so far to go,  
but hey this isn't a secret  
it's something we all know...  
and still I rise  
Like the phoenix being rebirthed  
from the ashes of its own demise...  
still still still I rise.

*- Phoenix Nastasha Russell*

**Phoenix Nastasha Russell** is an accomplished poet, whose raw, sensual, energetic and enlightening words have been featured in books like Rivers of Emotions and websites like. A fantastic performer, Phoenix will bring you to your feet or have you doubled over with laughter.

## STILL I RISE

*Phoenix Natasha Russell*

I've been beaten down and left for dead and still I rise. There were those that I thought had my back should I fall but when it happened there was no one to call..... and yet through it all still I rise.

There have been times when I was abused by the very ones that I thought cared for me, but I made it out with my soul still intact so I say to you... still I rise

Where there was nothing but falsehoods and the maybe I should or could from those that I viewed as role models but the advise that was given was nothing I could believe in .....yet still I rise.

I give unconditional love to those that I call my friends and although that love may not be wholeheartedly returned .....still I rise.

I've been looking for the true meaning of my actions and my deepest regrets, seeking the answers as to why did this happen and the realization that if I had only thought this through and done this differently that I wouldn't be dealing with this horrible outcome but, what I've come to realize is that it is all destined, it's all a learning experience.....and still I rise

Those with the purest of hearts; those free of malice intent in the way their daily lives are spent ..... are the ones that suffer the most ..... having a pure heart comes with a grave cost .... When you open yourself up to those you trust and in return they cause you to feel lonely and lost .....and still I rise.

Reflecting on the material things that I've lost; items that came at a great cost. They were either taken from me by some sneak thief in the night ..... a coward full of jealousy and spite, not caring about the struggles I've gone through to get what I've got.....these material things can be replaced but the trust I once had in people is now gone without a trace ..... and still I rise

I got caught up in the "I coulda, woulda, shoulda", when remembering quite a bit of the experiences of my life some things I'm so ashamed I've done that I wish I could find a safe non-judgmental place to hide, somewhere where I don't feel the dumb mistakes I've made would affect my self esteem and pride.....yet still I rise

How do I nurture and restore to the forefront that kinder, more loving, gentler side.....the parts of me now locked away and hidden so deep inside? Me always remembering that my life has been one bumpy rollercoaster ride.....full of high ups and drastic drops from astounding heights and of my

being thrown all around. Me wishing only that I could plant my feet once again on solid ground and praying that I manage to get off this rollercoaster ride somehow.....and still I rise.

Hey have you seen my pride come running this way? That part of me that seems to always get in the way of making wise decisions and coming to clear conclusions concerning the events of my day.....my true purpose in life is yet to be found and I will never find it if my pride is left unbound; keeping me on that rollercoaster with it high ups and tragic downs.....yet still I rise.

It's all been a sordid affair.....wanting to be there where the treatment of me will finally be fair, but I'm forced to remain here in this frame of mind, just where will destiny take me this time? When will we be free to climb the wondrous life tree the one we planted when we finally made it out of slavery...its roots so nice and deep.....holding much of our rich history.....history to be explored not ignored as if some of the facts aren't straight. Being held back and oppressed and the ones responsible still have no sense of regret..... and still I rise.

I've been told that consequences are a direct reaction to the choices you make.....well I choose to live happy and free but in total contradiction to my choice the consequences have been oppression as if time has been turned back to the days of bigotry and slavery.....and still I rise

I'm sitting here all wrapped up in myself full of self doubt, self pity no room for anything else. At times I feel so out of place, as if being of Trans experience and of color is nothing but a disgrace, but as we fight for equality we will prove this is not the case .... and still I rise. Babies being thrown away children being kidnapped or shot, rapist, pedophiles roaming our streets, cops accosting, arresting or shooting the wrong people as they patrol their assigned beats.....Oh, we've come so far but have yet so far to go, but hey this isn't a secret it's something we all know ..... and still I rise

Like the phoenix being rebirthed from the ashes of its own demise .....still still still I rise.

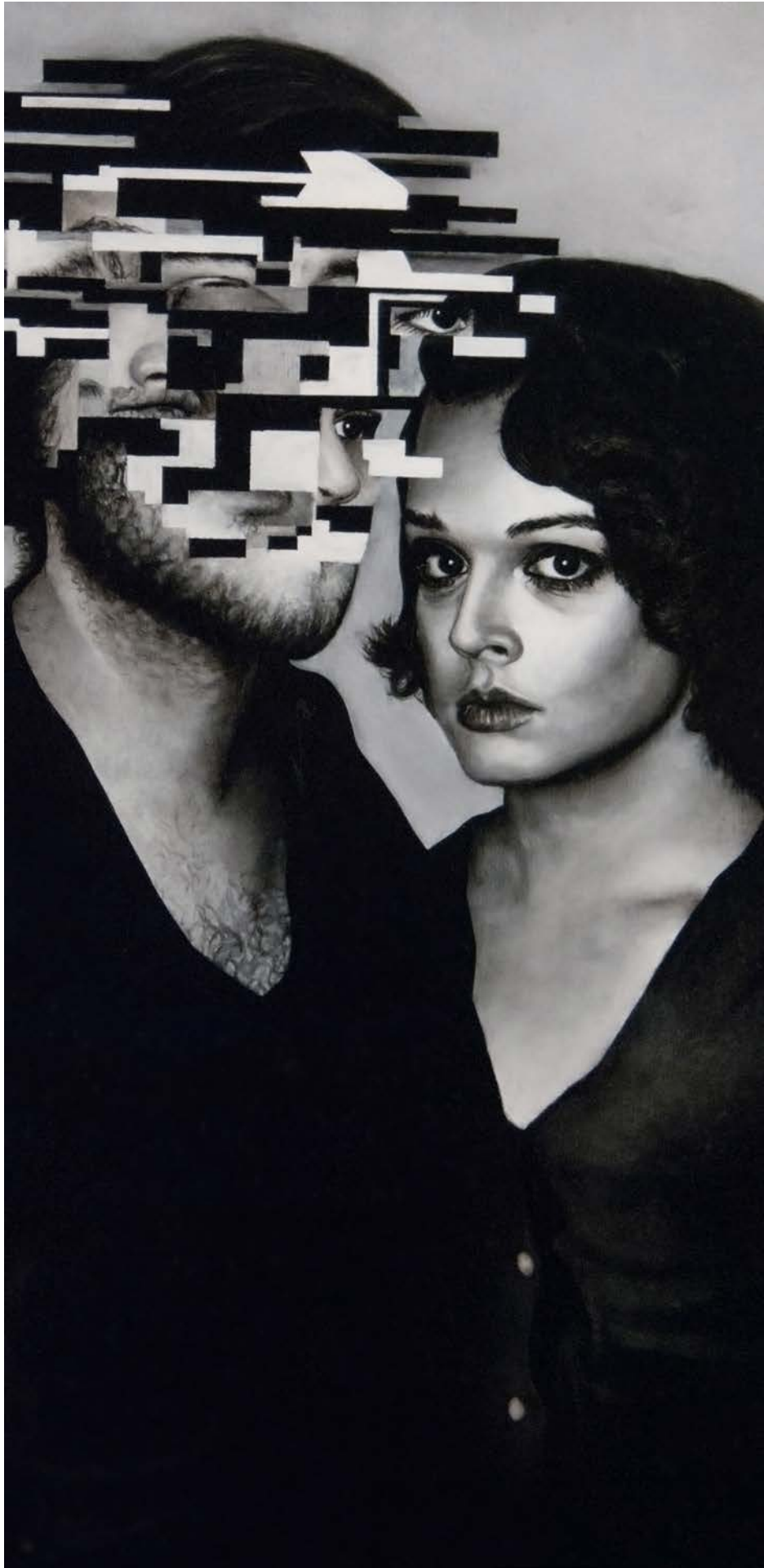
# **Kate Weakley**

Self-Portrait

2014. oil on canvas, 20" x 16"

"I'm a transgender artist. This piece is titled "Self-Portrait" because both figures are me. The figure on the left is me before my transition and the figure on the right is me about 5 months into my transition."

Kate Weakley  
(Behance.net)





Expect no more. This is happiness.™

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The Betsy is on a mission to redefine hospitality. Poetry is at the heart of who we are and what we do. Our Writer's Room welcomes artists in residence – to stay with us and just do their work. During their residency, we invite them to be a guest of honor at a Salon, where over a delicious breakfast they share work in progress. Other programs include live music, art exhibitions, poetry readings, book signings, guest room libraries, poems placed on pillows at turn down each night, and charitable collaboration (since 2009) with almost 250 nonprofit organizations in South Beach, and beyond.

**Visit our websites for more information.**

[thebetsyhotel.com/the-betsy/community](http://thebetsyhotel.com/the-betsy/community)

[betsywritersroom.com](http://betsywritersroom.com)

[hyamplutzikpoetry.com](http://hyamplutzikpoetry.com)

**The poems, poem fragments, and artwork used in this chapbook are presented for educational use only. This collection is not for sale and is presented by The Betsy - South Beach as part of our cultural programming.**



THE  
**BETSY**  
SOUTHBEACH



PLUTZIK GOLDWASSER  
FAMILY FOUNDATION



THE  
**BETSY**  
COMMUNITY FUND  
AT THE MIAMI FOUNDATION

