

Book of Silhouettes

Poems by Anna Fulford

Cover Design by Bonnie Jean Michalski

We have slept in caves for days
—demonstrating the human challenge—
walking on our knees,
turning, turning and finally
curling in the dirt to sleep.

We clap our elbows to replace speaking.

Our first design is given fins
for its speaking purpose, but
the judges mark them lowly
on their glowing scoreboard.

An urge to sea life may be born in every infant's ear as susurrations,
or maybe that some bodies of water are modal operators in a statement of human probability

Directly we had established rules for communication
and an agricultural agreement,
the challenge became commercial in nature.

Any transaction undertaken by a designer was limited to the confines of his or her own body.

When the first designer strapped a sewing machine to his head, we all followed suit.

It was both

advertisement of our services

and a mobile workspace

as we each secured a dusty length of road upon which to hawk our wares.

Though the show was meticulously advertised, its producers saw a chance that animal behaviors—even in the service of high fashion—might go down badly at home.

Opinion polls were taken, and the forums fairly loaded up online,

until the entire viewing world regressed to a smaller market time—a public market square—in sympathy with the contestants.

We were now privileged to shop at the village bazaar;
thus,

our next silhouettes were most flexible—

many red panels of elastic, stacked
upon each other. Each panel like magnets, pulling

oppositely, so she
moved down the run

way in darts and
pieces, like

a
column
of

flame.

Boxy skyline in earth
And stone clear light,
with a honey
slight moon

day long

Our models began to love us.

We were confused.

We became several

leggy piles of human in the bathtub.

The winner of our next assignment used the smooth contours of white porcelain to keep his model stationary. A 50 pound bisque hood and cast-iron claw-feet made it impossible for her to continue in the competition. The remaining models would move around her in the years to come—sympathetic, scornful, and soon enough forgetful.

The designer crawled into his bath-house creation every night enjoying the strictures of it.

No longer a model human, she came to rely upon these visits as a chance to test her theories of the outside world. Tree—thought—word. The small matter clinging to his shoes.

For generations [the sad squabbles handed down]

a full-piece suit, cut out

with a show-through for the radiator, the Chinese restaurant.

Deciding which harmful material to prevent the world.

A shadowed cap, a sooted armor made from stacks of melanin.

No model could relinquish it.

He happened by—a designer from Biscayne—
third-rate, but skilled at making pleats.
He stopped just long enough to iron a thousand
thin creases in a stray wall of pink adobe
to courtyard her basket garden.

*set her
to weaving her
self in a basket waist-
down. a catch
sun. an upset
set of metal wind-
ow fan blades:
solar directors to-
ward her
basket-half, in-
fuse her with her
nutrients and
she sprouted well--
Up the near pillar.*

There was a small war.

And New England as it should be,
created among us in miniature.

A tree-laden island with belts of mist in the early hours.

We set up a chase.

The humans on the desert side of the island were ferocious, but surprisingly
lacked an instinct for competition.

We dressed them in buckskins and bright fraying strips of cloth.

One designer made a breastplate of desert stones for the leader. At sunset, the dusty browns would
animate, he assured the headman. “Stand in opposition to the sun as it leaves you. The light refracts in
a regal way—all purples and golds. This will be your best time for authority.”

Their desert had a viewscope that was not compatible

with the game of sardines we wished to play.

*

Emily is dressed up as a shepardess and stuffed into her sister's backpack.

As the games progress, she is forgotten. Her fury mounts.

Our group is gathered in a mossy cleft.

All but the final seeker crouch together on the pads of green.

Bounce

Bounce

gently in anticipation...

. . . . * *

*

*...

and Emily calls the walls of the canyon together

—|—

the accolades of bird call resume. A demure applause.

Meanwhile an investigation turns up: moving through the catwalk,
peering at the contestants in uncomfortable ways, watching the gymnasts
where their lycra meets a nude wiggle. After the appraisal, one row of sequins
was carefully deactivated from each.

Objectionally each
whether a gymnast walked strenuously
or loudmouth in the face of her auditor
Exhaustingly each

She could only sleep.

*She asked him to smooth her into bed
and pin the price tags to her sheets.*

For his Winter Viking Line, he filled each model up with rage and trimmed her with a fur.

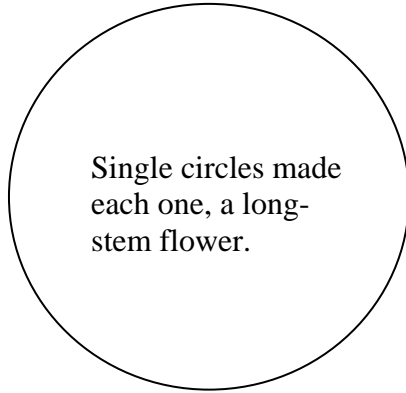
The contrast of tickle and a visceral anger
caused several of his girls to walk lock-muscled to the end of the runway and explode.

The remainder stayed in their dressing room
where the salt smell of cured leather and all the floating danders
soon put them in a Midwinter slumber.
They lay about the darkened room in squashy heaps,
waiting there for any frame of God to return.

Never mind.

He was sure that pirate chic would bring him a place in the final innings of this contest.

In the Fine Art portion of our competition,
the final female designer was showing two halves of an over-ripe peach with the pit removed.



The central piece in her show was a movement
made by one particular body holding a shawl
—arms wide out with knees bent,
leaping to spin.

A close second—our favorite for the overall prize
—rolled the walls in dry ice
, trapping all the insects for a moment

Outside the finale there was a parade
and blockades made of sandstone.

A mob of people built a wall
a mesa.

They swarmed atop it.

This was meant to be a static piece, but some difficult emotions got out of control and the crowd sent a civilian Humvee over the edge—a white stretch limo—picked up bodily and crushed nose-first in the street.

At last the balloonist,
making floatable clothes with his air torch.

Blowing up the pant legs, and she rises
from the ground.