



Lauren J. Rogener

## Still Life

It happened so fast when it started to happen stuck before I could stop or see the start or what it was amounting to

on a staircase climbing neither up nor down (but over<sup>1</sup>) neither  
descending nor retreating shamelessly with only slightest apprehension  
summiting

not the  
slightest bit  
of under  
standing  
taking  
exception  
with  
not  
under  
standing  
over and  
over.

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<sup>1</sup> more over

Sculptures flaked with jealousy.

Footsteps, even, echoing, unimportantly and Only Her.

The washing-out-and-over feeling after even during was unpaintable, unfigured: wet abstraction disembodied, aptly unrenderable, not a subject.

And I believed I was invisible:

All the people who had come to see just for that very purpose just to look at things all day missed our exhibition maybe it was while I was sweating into the marble that my legs fused with the floor and pulled me below the plane of visibility out of perspective uncomposed me. I exist only in that I fill the tiny cracks in the marble below where I was, now above where I am. I exist like the marble hair chiseled into the back of Medea's head which anyone who could take their eyes off her dagger could see<sup>2</sup> and like her I clutched at something in a private moment and considered just as carefully my course of action:

hands cast in plaster grasped at draping folds and coal shadowed creases

flitting over filigreed panels hung with curls and

rooms and corners of rooms none belonging to me but all mine opening into each other I form the walls the windows and I fill the floors I enclose am dispersed and leak. I pour, plaster.

Unguarded no force existed that could discover us at any moment descend the staircase or ascend from below and catch us there installed together in inexplicable entanglement. I had leaked out of my skin and stuck to the floor. Anyone could have come and no one would have seen us, but only felt that the air was somehow used.

It is more likely that we were mounted in a glass case like a formaldehyde shark or any other thing that people come for the very purpose of seeing and everyone saw without lingering long enough to puncture our sitter's daze. Who would speak to

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<sup>2</sup> Story, William Wetmore. *Medea*. 1865-8. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

a sculpture?<sup>3</sup> And sitters speak only the sculptor's  
words unheard against the flytrap glue of wall-  
mounted words stuck still most removed from us.

Not the slightest bit of understanding no one saw and no one could have seen.

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<sup>3</sup> Pygmalion

## Author Bio

Lauren J. Rogener is a doctoral student in English literature at the University of North Texas. Lauren specializes in Renaissance drama, specifically Jacobean court performance. Her publications and performances include the poem "How I Want It", published in the *Boston Literary Magazine* and the libretto *No Masque for Good Measure*, presented as part of the Cluster New Music and Integrated Arts Festival in Winnipeg, Canada. This poem, 'Still Life', was commissioned by Canadian composer Darren Russo and has been set to music as part of a song cycle. It will be performed in Toronto.

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