To protect and serve

He walked upright,
eyes dark and deep-cut as night,
a tall and strapping man
but beneath the killer’s knee,
handcuffed and cheek in the dust,
body and breath arrested,
he called for his mother,
just like a child, like another,
a boy who ran
like scared children do,
and raised two hands
on command,
but turned to face a
peacekeeper’s bullet
in this sleepwalking land,
this home of the brave,
as pavement turns to grave,
life worth less than a crooked dime
and skin color still a crime.

-Rebecca Friend
Unbroken
   For Glen

The patterned bowl is short-sided, browns and rusty orange, with three nubby legs
It is of a type from Costa Rica, a gift from my boss on sabbatical
Thanks for my fort-holding.

I should eat out of it instead of just looking at it collecting dust
Filled with the last week’s or month’s doo-dads
Paper clips stray bit of a food wrapper
It should have some lovely cheese.

I often wonder how he packed the bowl and got it back unbroken
Imagine him off on his own away from everyone and all his
Myriad responsibilities, tossing dirty clothes into a crappy bag

Probably with a broken zipper
Because at the office we all worked to pack and unpack his thoughts
Arrange his day focus his attention
Someone at home or work would be in charge of gathering his days.

I feel especially appreciative of this little gift
And have kept it safe over the moves and years
Maybe I shouldn’t eat out of it after all.

-Chris Arvidson
Ars Poetica

Dabs of paint on canvas.
Brushstrokes pull the colors
this way and that,
twisting blue and green and gray together.

Layered paint rises from the surface.
Bumps and swirls and sweeping lines
Beckon to my fingers,
Pull me toward another world.
As if touch would tell me more.

I don’t go.

The practiced hand that made this scene
Looked and broke apart what lay before him,
Distilled line and color,
Stripped away distractions.

When he stepped away,
Only what was true remained.

I step into his absent place,
stand rapt before his work.
Trace his lines, revel in his colors,
Put together what he broke apart.
Find my own truth.

It is all I can do.
It is enough.

-David Collins
THE SEED DOESN’T DIE

After “Graine,” by Alain Le Boucher

This intricate body
speaks the legacy
of dance—

a teardrop of skirting,
spine carefully bent,
teeth nearly touching

and the intricacy of moves both
calculated and free.

The many connections
of a brain
at work,
seeding

together
and alone,

train going up
that first mountain.

Almost I see
lift-off

a galaxy of stars—

-David Radavich
Resist

Corrugated Black femininity
sits erect, metallic, unflinching.

She stares above her stiff straw necklace
at you, resists your “ethnic” descriptions.

Like the black halfpipe beneath her,
the years of strangling
capitalism & industry,
she is curved, anonymous,
rigidly held in place

but no one is her owner, not
the artist, not the gallery.

-Kat Bodrie
**Wreck Of The “Ancon” In Loring Bay, Alaska**

A hawser cast too early, slack fire
in the boiler—and all is riven.
Ebb tide pulls and the *Ancon*
breaks her keel on a hidden reef, listing
so steeply her starboard sidewheel
is nearly dry, shrugged like a shoulder
to the chill gray sameness of sea and fog.

Fast between two worlds of hope
she leans toward a lightening sky
and the headland she will never round,
yet so close to shore a loud hail
should right her. Knifing out from dark bushes,
a fallen trunk and shoreline merge
to suggest a prow, ghost of a ruined hull
and a long forgotten ore.

Written by Kenneth Chamlee
black flies swarm  circle in swells  before his eyes  inside his head
four hundred land on wet paint  frantic like the artist  to escape
he bakes in raw golden wheat  outside the pan
the crows spot it  they hunger for him  pluck flies from the canvas
drenched in melted-butter sun  blinded at midday  unlike the light of night
when stars turn to white-hot egg yolks  swirl under an Indian yellow moon
chased by curly gusts of gossipy wind
a burnt umber cypress  gyrates toward the turbulent sky
shadows haunt a slumbered village  steepled  tightly secured against stark bright
demons diverted with cobalt-blue brew  a threat only he can foresee
oils glide off brush tips  guided by the erratic hand  translated into voices of insanity
images shimmer like a desert mirage  beauty spawned by genetic whirlwind
for a moment or a year

the doleful sound of a distant train
takes him to Rouen or Tarascon
while his mind contemplates that other
form of travel,
the one he counts on
to transport him
to the stars.

-Vincent

~After the Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit – 2021

-Linda Phillips