



ISSUE ONE
WORDS WE WEAVE

Polaris

THE EDINBURGH PARK
LITERARY ZINE

POETRY FROM ART AT EDINBURGH PARK

Contents

- P4 **Words We Weave**
Minerva Protects
Pax From Mars
- P6 **Elle Nash**
Always, The Feeling of
Needing To Rush Back...
- P8 **JL Williams**
Pax
- P10 **Dovecot Studios**
Minerva Protects
Pax From Mars
- P18 **Rob A. Mackenzie**
The Godly Business
- P20 **Janette Ayachi**
Peace & War

Polaris

EDITORIAL WORDS WE WEAVE

Issue One

Words We Weave

Poet Contributors

Elle Nash

JL Williams

Rob A. Mackenzie

Janette Ayachi

Editor

Janette Ayachi

Arts Curator

Matthew Jarratt

Photography

Andy Mather

Timothy Soar

Published by

Parabola

Design

Founded



Welcome to Polaris, Edinburgh Parks' new bi-annual literary zine which showcases a series of poets commissioned to write about the art displayed on site, whether on the grounds, hanging from the walls or in the very architecture of the buildings themselves. It will also feature updates on activities and amenities that are always developing at Edinburgh Park throughout the year.

Our pilot edition, collated on the autumnal equinox of 2023, will focus on Leon Kossoff's 'Minerva Protects Pax From Mars' which has been woven into a tapestry by Edinburgh's Dovecot Studio.

Our plan is to bring you live poetry events at Edinburgh Park and host readings from our commissioned poets.

Watch this space!

polariszine.com

WORDS WE WEAVE MINERVA PROTECTS PAX FROM MARS

From the 1600s to the 1990s to the 21st century – the original depiction of ‘Minerva Protects Pax From Mars’ has gone through a series of inspirations and celebrations. From the Baroque opulence of Paul Rubens, painting it as a peace treaty for King Charles I of England when at war with Spain for almost five years, to Leon Kossoff’s expressive brush strokes and then the fine structure and meticulousness of the Dovecot weavers. The Rubens painting is at the National Gallery London, the Kossoff sketch is at the Tate Modern and we have the Dovecot tapestry here at Edinburgh Park. Taken through the ages three times as a visual image, we also now have responses from Scotland-based commissioned poets who write ekphrastic (a word which denotes poetry inspired by art) poetry in response.

The allegory never shifts through each rendition of ‘Minerva Protects Pax From Mars’ – Minerva, Goddess of Wisdom, drives away Mars, God of War. The fruits of peace – literally, luscious fruits – are enjoyed by children who would be among war’s victims. It is always an anti-war piece, suggesting that if we embrace peace then prosperity and plenty will soar. It signals the same emotions in its viewer as a huge scale, beautifully positioned tapestry at New Park Square. From a distance, the stitch is uncannily realistic to paint. It opens up space like a great moment.

Leon Kossoff, much like his counterparts Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud, not only had a lifelong commitment to image-making but, they highlighted renewal after war and survival in their work, uniting in the desire to depict the trauma of post-war society in Britain.

Kossoff was a figurative painter born in 1926 in Islington to Jewish parents from Russia, he served in World War II and he died when he was 93. His expressionistic portraits and stark images of urban life made him one of the most popular artists working at that time. He had an incredible technique of applying and reapplying lead paint into thick impasto. He used loaded brushes, dense surfaces, and anxious strokes creating a somewhat rushed and desperate finish.

Kossoff painted subjects over and over whether it was the pedestrians and underground stations of London streets; public pools or construction sites after the Blitz, his friends and family, or the permanent collection of paintings in the National Gallery London – which is where he first met the Rubens original. These sketches started when Kossoff began visiting galleries at the age of 10, and he found this a way of bonding with the Old Masters, excavating some of the painting's mysteries, honouring and magnifying their power. He is keen to declare that they are not copies, but instead an attempt to set up the essence of the original.

He inhabits the paintings before he draws them, standing in front of them to enter the scene, and in a sense, he is joining in until he feels free to move about in its imaginative spaces. Kossoff believed that if you loved a picture you could learn how to draw from it and I think this is exactly what the Dovecot weavers have captured, the accuracy and detail of the stitch show us they really loved Kossoff's painting. Moreover, the poetry, crafted in the unique style of each individual writer as they weave their words, is a true reflection of their respect and admiration for the art. Each depiction does not seek to transcribe, replicate or paraphrase the other, rather, it acknowledges the gulf that separates it from the pictorial culture of former times and reveals the longing to find points of contact and connections with our artistic predecessors.

*Janette Ayachi, Editorial
Poet-in-Residence at Edinburgh Park*

ELLE NASH

ALWAYS, THE FEELING OF NEEDING TO RUSH BACK...

In response to 'Minerva Protects Pax From Mars'



ELLE NASH — is the author of *Gag Reflex* (Clash Books) and *Animals Eat Each Other* (404ink), and the short story collection *Nudes* (404ink). Upon publication of *Animals Eat Each Other* in the UK, Elle appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival to present the work of underrepresented voices with Amnesty International, and to speak about sex, death, and feminism in literature. Her work appears in *Guernica*, *Adroit*, *BOMB Magazine*, *The Creative Independent*, *Hazlitt*, *Literary Hub*, *Cosmopolitan*, *New York Tyrant*, and elsewhere. She is a founding editor of *Witch Craft Magazine*, runs the *Goth Book Club*, and currently lives in Glasgow.

www.ellenash.net

in the curve of field, grasses slither in wind
the shout of man

like brunt bore against a plate of armor.
their skin is clammy.

the final thought is always *why*.
she feeds when she is called,

but what an ache persists.
mealy fruit for the children

hardening empty little stomachs
into wisdom. a golden frenzy

bursts inside a chest,
then it trembles, then he is just a man

who wants and wants and wants and wants.
what is peace but a pact

tied like a tourniquet,
clasping the essence of a nation

like a gentle ruby. how can they
know what is tender?

each twist slipknots tighter, tight, a plait of hair,
a thread loomed through, milk squeezed from

curds, salt etched deeply into meat.
they string up. hooks like useless anchors.

the field, the maw of battle,
is splitting open like a geode.

the tourniquet has made its vow. he remembers his
forever want. that is when he calls her name.

suddenly, a timelessness. hanging, he returns to see
a breast that feeds his legacy.

JL WILLIAMS

PAX

After 'Minerva Protects Pax From Mars', a tapestry by Dovecot Weavers inspired by a painting by Leon Kossoff inspired by a painting by Peter Paul Rubens



JL WILLIAMS — Books by JL Williams include *Condition of Fire* (Shearsman, 2011), *Locust and Marlin* (Shearsman, 2014), *House of the Tragic Poet* (If A Leaf Falls Press, 2016), *After Economy* (Shearsman, 2017) and *Origin* (Shearsman, 2022). Published widely in journals, her poetry has been translated into numerous languages. She writes libretti for the The Opera Story and was commissioned to write the 2023 English Touring Opera children's opera, *The Wish Gatherer*. Williams is hopeful about the simple and mysterious power of poetry that allows us to know ourselves, each other and the world more deeply.

www.jlwilliamspoeetry.co.uk

And the sudden change of light
And the hand that lifts to shield
The light from baby's eyes

And the hand that lifts the thread
And the hand that lifts the fruit
And the hand that lifts the brush

And the sudden burst of light
And the armaments of war
In the children's sleeping room

And the woman with her breast
Cupped in hand to feed
And the man looking on

And the harpy in the night
And the silence of a lifetime
As you paint, and paint and paint

And the warp opposed to weft
And the weft opposed to warp
In their tension making cloth

And the child astonished by light
And the accoutrements of peace
Shown by fruit, and bread and milk

And the silence in the sky
As the bomb goes either way
Both to ground and to the night

And the wisdom of the gods
Whose only gift is time
And a butterfly's caress

And a sudden change of light
While the men lay down their arms
And the weavers take a rest

And the painter stills his brush
And the child who is hurt
Gives their anger to the wind

Who takes it like a treasure
Past the seas and past the land
Who takes it to the end

Where all things die and start again

**DOVECOT STUDIOS
MINERVA PROTECTS
PAX FROM MARS**













“THE COMMISSION FROM EDINBURGH PARK TO CREATE AN ARTWORK INSPIRED BY LEON KOSSOFF’S PAINTING ‘MINERVA PROTECTS PAX FROM MARS’ IS SIGNIFICANT. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME A WORK BY THE EXPRESSIONIST ARTIST HAS BEEN TRANSLATED INTO TAPESTRY. IT WILL ALSO BE THE FIRST NEW PUBLIC ARTWORK FOR EDINBURGH BY DOVECOT IN A DECADE.”

Celia Joicey Director, Dovecot Studios

DOVECOT – Dovecot is a leading contemporary tapestry studio and a centre for contemporary art, craft and design in the heart of Edinburgh’s old town. Founded in 1912, Dovecot has created tapestries with some of the UK’s leading artists and architects. From Graham Sutherland and David Hockney, to Barbara Rae and Chris Ofili, each new tapestry creates an opportunity for aesthetic discussion, experimentation and collaboration.

ROB A. MACKENZIE

THE GODLY BUSINESS

After 'Minerva Protects Pax From Mars', a tapestry by Dovecot Weavers inspired by a painting by Leon Kossoff inspired by a painting by Peter Paul Rubens



ROB A. MACKENZIE — is from Glasgow and lives in Leith. He studied theology in Edinburgh and played guitar and saxophone for an indie band. He has published two poetry pamphlets and four full collections. *The Book of Revelation*, his third collection, was published in 2020 during lockdown and *Woof! Woof! Woof!* was published in July 2023 – both from Salt Publishing. His poems, articles, reviews and translations have appeared in many literary magazines, and his work has been translated into French, Italian and Czech. For ten years, he was the reviews editor of Magma Poetry magazine. He runs Blue Diode Press.

www.bluediode.co.uk

- I. No one has ever needed a god
to start a war. The gods exchange
friendly fire among themselves

while humans can be trusted
the real thing: authorities letting
the blood of others, bodies in bags

proclaimed *at peace*, rocks aimed
at heads morphed into tambourines
for official parodies of worship.

Mars feels small and unappreciated.
Minerva holds him back out of habit.
Pax unbuttons purely for attention.
- II. Among gods, nothing is sacred. They eat
christs for breakfast: shredded christs,
christ pops, smoked christs smothered

in salt and sauce. They sleep around
with snoring christs, make furtive plans
for christs with glow-in-the-dark grins.

Christ blows a kiss from his wooden
loveshack. The gods are too busy with
each other to blow anything back;

they butter up, button down, bludgeon
soft skulls from behind – gods act bloody
but their sacrifice is transparently mortal.
- III. So many bodies, so little space in between
for human manoeuvre. The gods are busying
themselves with godly business, a brand that

– ancient as folly – escapes the modern eye,
extends from Rome or Athens, mythologised
as a fairy tale, but every bit as true to life

as any corporate logo. Monetized queues
form to suck the teat of trademark Pax.
Mars and Minerva clink their cola bottles,

bless the rotted teeth, torn digestive tracts,
dead jingles. *It's the real thing*. The empties
hold votive candles lit for stony Madonnas.

JANETTE AYACHI

PEACE & WAR

(After Paul Rubens, After Leon Kossoff, After Dovecot Studio)



JANETTE AYACHI – (1982 -) BA (Film Media/ English Lit. Stirling University), MSc (Creative Writing, Edinburgh University), is a Scottish-Algerian poet. She is the author of poetry pamphlets *Pauses At Zebra Crossings* & *A Choir of Ghosts* & her hardback children's book *The Mermaid, The Girl and The Gondola* (Black Wolf Edition) was illustrated by Fabio Perla. Her first full poetry collection *Hand Over Mouth Music* (Pavilion, Liverpool University Press) won the Saltire Poetry Book of the Year Literary Award 2019. Her poetry, prose & essays have been translated into several languages in a broad range of newspapers & anthologies. She is a regular on BBC arts programmes & she collaborates with artists & performs at festivals internationally. Her next poetry book *QuickFire, Slow Burning* (Pavilion, LUP) will be released in early 2024. She is the poet-in-residence at Edinburgh Park.

www.janetteayachi.com

How it must have felt for Kossoff
to escape into the Old Masters,
for the weavers to choreograph
across the loom, slow then faster.

This allegory formed first in velvet,
then impasto & now thread
created at a time in history when tumult
could rise to strike some dead;

peace treaties between countries,
world wars & armed conflicts,
each raising awareness
with their individual artistic tricks.

Terrorism, civil wars, drug wars,
ethnic violence in 32 countries today,
so much of the world is enraged,
unsafe, suffering & in pain.

Where is Minerva when you need her
to drive away Mars,
or Ceres to offer luscious fruits,
nymphs with treasures also too far.

Angry mobs, marches, people hate so quickly
yet are ashamed to love;
old feuds tipped high for justice,
more rubble to sift, more dirt to dig up.

Accepting a behaviour for so long
we spell specific reactions when we engage,
a need for a riot, a natural human hunger
for revenge & a concierge of rage,

manifesto against manifesto, breaking rules,
breaking glass with bullets & barks,
the sense is born from nonsense,
no war in war/mth, light from dark.

Humanity against humanity;
& where is the sanity in that?

Zippered up in plastic, numbered as a statistic;
mass mourning, makeshift morgues,
a taste of revolution in the air,
an alloy of a hollow prayer joining support

scratching its back against the cathedral wall.

This hunger, muted desire,
the inextinguishable struggle & unutterable stillness
of a shared inferno of quickfire.

Gallows humour, the rumour
of more deaths, daily diets of distraction,
nail-biting, nightly tossing, so much to fret
so we fool ourselves into abstraction,

fortunate to have suffered,
to have mastered a way to self-heal
& learn teachings from the viper strikes
& wound bites sent on spinning wheels;

it has been messy work, yet in the slums
of shadow, we have found glory
built mirrored walls to reflect the light,
found paint & thread to share the same story.

But ruined environments return
to rural communities after chaos,
lands reap fertility, civilisations change,
transform after getting lost in the pathos;

we are all humble learners, vulnerable humans,
imperfectly perfect, souls unfurled.
Peace is found first in the self, cell self & spirit self,
then the nation, then the world.

My heart assumes the action of crumpling,
seeing how Kossoff traced the dynamics,
how the warp & weft strings interlace here
to look like brush strokes of paint with its magic.

Inhale peace, exhale suffering.
Soldier on a battlefield, wing tripped upwards, dagger bent in -
Inhale peace, exhale suffering.

Release the fury, find compassion for all things -
Inhale peace, exhale suffering.
The idea of freedom is shifting
we have music, art & love, this is our win -
Inhale peace, exhale suffering.

Each generation feels the battle or race
between enlightenment & extinction.

Poetry is peace bombs over these war zones,
the power of words for which there is no competition.



PATINA A BAKERY AND CULTURAL SPACE

Patina brings together a curiosity of food with personal interests of design and performance. Food is a big part of what we do but our passion comes from a curiosity in people, place, friendship and creativity. Since we began we've wanted to make spaces where everyone feels welcomed and accepted. At Kiln we have over 13 nationalities on our staff with regulars from all over the world. Patina similarly is somewhere we celebrate difference, encourage conversation and where you will always have a sense of belonging. We hope you enjoy what we have built.

Patina Restaurant & Bakery
patinaedinburgh.com

VISIT 1 NEW PARK SQUARE

