

2023 Patricia Dobler Poetry Award Results and Poem

Rose DeMaris, a poet from Brooklyn, NY, is the winner of the 2023 Patricia Dobler Poetry Award, sponsored by Carlow University's Madwomen in the Attic Creative Writing Workshops.

Named for the late poet and Carlow professor Patricia Dobler, who directed the Women's Center for Creative Writing and the Madwomen in the Attic workshops, this annual contest is open to women writers aged 40 and over who have not published a full-length book of poetry.

DeMaris' poem, "Vessel," with its singular, distinct voice and its willingness to risk, distinguished itself from a field of 397 entries.

Poet Allison Joseph, the judge of the 2023 Dobler Award, wrote this about DeMaris' poem:

"It was an honor to select 'Vessel' for the Dobler Poetry Prize. This poem's themes of grief, redemption, and loss are handled so delicately and sensitively that the reader is drawn into the exquisite world created through the poem's articulate diction, exacting imagery, and sweeping lines. As the speaker explores generational trauma and the tattered tendrils of lineage, the poem grows more forceful, more definitive, and more elegant. It's a perfect choice for a poetry contest honoring the strength of women and the force of generations and I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to present this poem to the public."

As winner of the 2023 Patricia Dobler Poetry Award, DeMaris will receive \$1,000; a public reading in Pittsburgh, PA, with judge Allison Joseph in Spring 2024; round-trip travel and lodging for her public reading; and publication of her winning poem in *Voices from the Attic, Volume XXIX*.

2023's honorable mentions are "Down in the Valley" by Kathryn Jordan from Berkeley, CA; and "Recollections of Summer" by K. Morgan Keenan from Oyster Bay, NY.

The remaining 2023 finalists are: "The Ringmaster," Terry Hall Bodine, Lynchburg, VA; "Origami," Nancy Burke, Evanston, IL; "Mother's Roses," Kristin W. Davis, Washington, DC; "Oak Tree Speaks of That Glorious, Dreaded Doom," Lynn Farmer, Decatur, GA; "Awards Night," Louise Kantro, Modesto, CA; "What to Bet on in Las Vegas," Angie Minkin, San Francisco, CA; "Brownstone Funeral," Kathy Raymond, Bristol, CT; "Night," Rhonda Steines, Lawrence, KS; and "Archaeology," Julia Thacker, Arlington, MA.

Rose DeMaris is an emerging poet and longtime educator. Her poems appear in *New England Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books Quarterly*, *Narrative*, *Image*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and elsewhere, and she was the recipient of Orison Books' 2022 Best Spiritual Literature Award in Poetry. She holds advanced degrees in English and Native American Studies, as well as an MFA in Poetry from Columbia University, where she was a Creative Writing Teaching Fellow. Born and raised in Southern California, she went on to spend many years in Montana and now lives in New York City.

Allison Joseph lives, writes, and teaches in Carbondale, IL, where she serves as Professor of English at Southern Illinois University. Her most recent books of poems include *Lexicon* (Red

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Hen Press), winner of the Best Book of the Year Award from Poetry by the Sea: A Global Conference, and *Confessions of a Barefaced Woman* (Red Hen Press), winner of the Feather Quill Book Award and finalist for the NAACP Image Award in Poetry. She was chosen as Illinois Author of the Year for 2022 by the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. Her work has appeared in newspapers and anthologies, including the *Best American Poetry* Series and the *New York Times*. She is the widow of the late poet and editor Jon Tribble.

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Vessel

I look for you in green, mother of my mother. If I tear one frond
of this potted palm, 3,000 miles from where you died, will your
laugh ring from its cells, and will the pinch of your powdered
bones vanish from inside this sealed and faceted fluorite vessel?

I thought I felt you in the tinted light of a wisteria arbor the day
after you left. I sat under the nectared arch, spent as a woman who
has given birth, stunned by your impossible exit. I'd watched you
unclench, pass through some portal I couldn't see, deep into green.

I look for you in green, forever steering, smiling, forever singing
to me in your lime Volkswagen Beetle, moving your long hands
to the radio's melody, fingernails iridescing with Angel's Wing
lacquer, as a date palm waves its fronds through the California air.

I left our birthplace for Brooklyn three weeks after losing you. Mist
rose from the foliage of Prospect Park where green ponds mirrored
green boughs. In the distance, a microphoned groom professed joy
at being bound till death to his best friend. I have your diamond ring.

I look for you in green, buy plants for my new home: Angel Wing
Begonia and Heart of Jesus Caladium. I'm daughter of your womb's
womb. I study the old album. My tear becomes a droplet in the duct
of your photographed eye. Always, you did that: cried when I cried.

You, in black and white, your own mother long dead. All legs, a 1940s
flirt, flatchested, cotton shorts and shirt, stretched on a Los Angeles
lawn, adopted away from your father's fists, committed
to a lifetime of joking. Grass-stained. 300,000 eggs in your ovaries.

I kiss the image. Chlorophyll covers my tongue. I open my mouth
to the sun. This is photosynthesis. I repeat the last words you spoke
to me: *I love*. Then I swallow them, my food. Your laugh now comes
from my lips. Mother of my mother, I conceive. I carry you in green.