

Classic Poetry Series

Elise Paschen
- poems -

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Elise Paschen()

Elise Paschen, a poet of Osage descent, is the co-founder and co-editor of Poetry in Motion, a program which places poetry posters in subways and buses across the country. The daughter of renowned prima ballerina, Maria Tallchief, and Chicago builder Henry D. Paschen, she was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, where she attended the Francis W. Parker School. A graduate of Harvard University, she holds . and . degrees in 20th Century British and American Literature from Oxford University.

Her poems have been published in The New Yorker, The New Republic, Ploughshares and Shenandoah.

Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America from 1988 until 2001, she recently was appointed the Poet Laureate of Three Oaks, Michigan. She was the featured Illinois poet at the National Book Festival sponsored by the Library of Congress in September 2006. Dr. Paschen teaches in the MFA Writing Program at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She lives in Chicago with her husband, Stuart Brainerd, and their two children.

Birth Day

For Alexandra, born May 17, 1999

Armored in red, her voice commands
every corner. Bells gong on squares,
in steeples, answering the prayers.
Bright tulips crown the boulevards.

Pulled from the womb she imitates
that mythic kick from some god's head.
She roars, and we are conquered.
Her legs, set free, combat the air.

Naked warrior: she is our own.
Entire empires are overthrown.

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Under The Dome

At times they will fly under. The dome
contains jungles. Invent a sky under the dome.

Creatures awake, asleep, at play, aglow:
they float - unbottled genii - under the dome.

Southern Belle, a splash of black, dusted with gold,
disassembles, assembling, acts shy under the dome.

Cattleheart, Giant Swallowtail, Clipper:
sail, navigate sky high under the dome.

Like confetti - a wedding - bits of Rice
Paper: sheer mimicry under the dome.

Magnificent Owl, in air, a pansy,
it feeds, wings up, eye to eye, under the dome.

Name them: Monarch, then Queen, last Viceroy.
What will scientists deify under the dome?

Basking against a leaf: a Banded Orange,
displayed like a bowtie under the dome.

A living museum. Exist to be observed:
never migrate, but live, then die, under the dome.

Lips, lashes, eyes. From outside in,
do beings magnify under the dome?

Lepidoptera. From the Greek: Scale-wing.
Chrysalis. Stay, butterfly, under the dome.

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