

Poets & Artists

Francis Aspinwall, Petroglyphs

Jeanni Nonemaker

Danielle Boroian, Dewy Walks

Olivia Corning

D. George, Walk Away

Jae Carothers

Ellie George, Wandering

Cassandra Rendon

Lorraine Gow, Tamales

Cassandra Rendon

Phoebe Heimendinger, Chocolate

Nicole Shar

Olivia Hibbert, Swimming is Swell

Rachel Skinner

Steph Rae Moran, Birdsong

Rachel Skinner

Justine Quintos, In the Garden

Raven Loc

Cassandra Rendon, Flood Season

Raven Loc

Kayla Sakai, Chained

Olivia Corning

Bart Salamack, Paris Reign

Victoria Crayne

Maya Salem, Grey

Dani Rodriguez

Laurence Scott, Journey to the Moon

Diana Huang

Lilysa Shar, The Box

Coralie Dal Gobbo

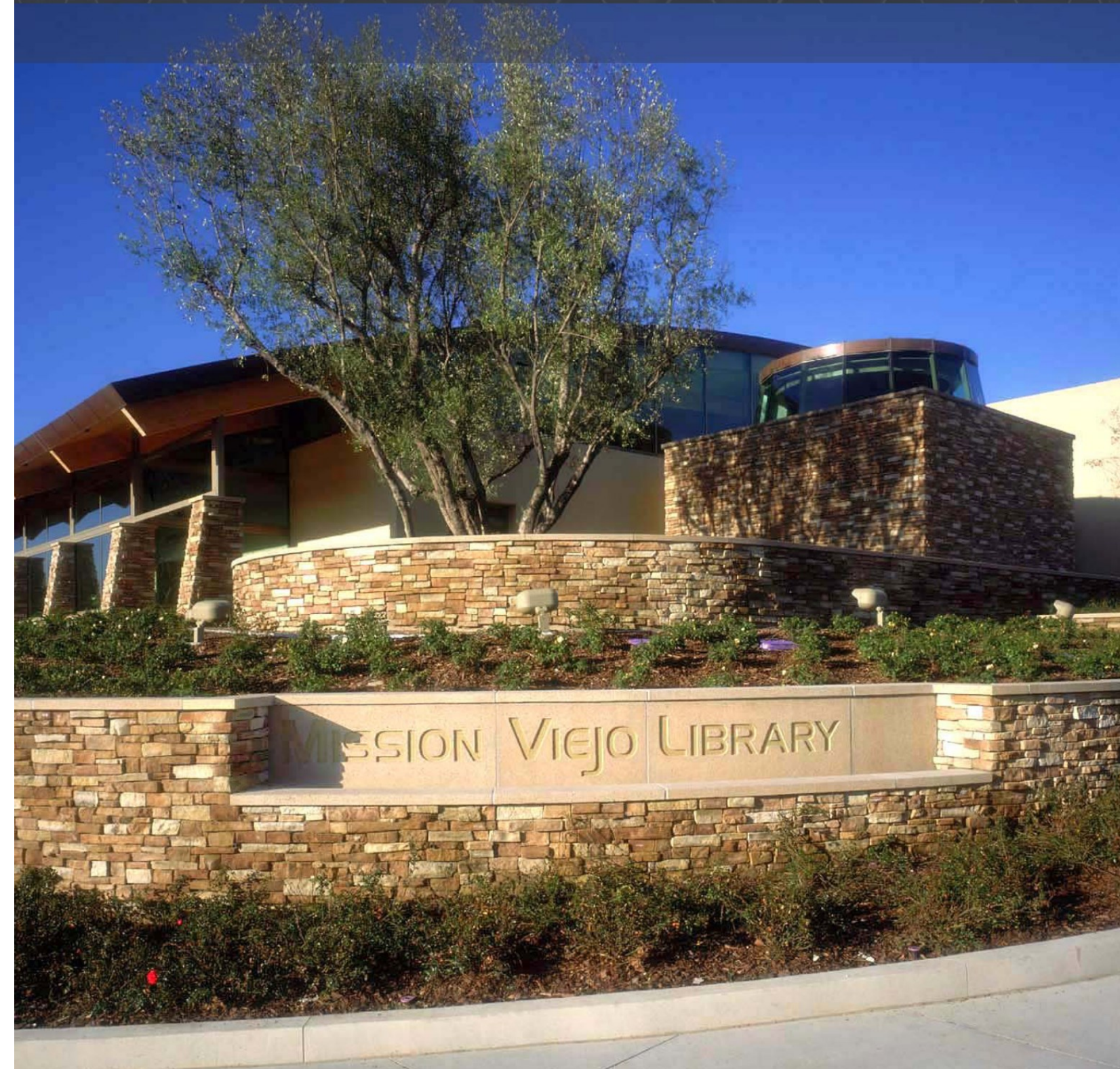
Jaymie Stopforth, Sweet Sacrifice

Heather Ikerd



MISSION VIEJO 2023

Poetry & Art Collaborative



Letters From The Collaborators

In the library world, we don't steal ideas - we borrow. I would be remiss if I didn't give credit for the program concept to Vanna Bells and Tania Bolin from the Yuma County Library District in Yuma, Arizona.

The success of their creation sparked the idea to bring it to our community that loves both literature and art, and I am incredibly thankful to Vanna for fielding many texts, phone calls, and emails begging for clarification and guidance.

The library would be nothing without our community partnerships. When I brought the idea to Allison Tran from the Potocki Center for the Arts, it became clear that this collaboration would be the perfect tie-in to both the library and cultural arts; this collaboration really is the epitome of "teamwork makes the dream work."

Thank you for everyone's participation and support, and we so look forward to continuing this project next year (and beyond!).

Lauren Regenhardt, Senior Librarian

As a librarian who has recently moved from the library to the cultural services side of Mission Viejo's Library & Cultural Services department, this project is exactly the kind of collaboration I was hoping to work on - an endeavor that highlights the essential connections between art and literature, encourages lifelong learning, and brings community members together.

Many thanks to Lauren Regenhardt for pitching this wonderful idea and collaborating to secure grant funding to make the dream a reality. We're both grateful to Genesis Hansen, Director of Library & Cultural Services, and our Public Services Manager Sarah Stimson for their continued support as we strive to develop new ways to enrich the community.

I also want to extend my gratitude to everyone who participated in this project. I am amazed by your creativity and talent!

Allison Tran, Library & Cultural Services Supervisor

Paris Reign



Nearing the advent of my winter season,
you give me reason to smile on a mid-summer's night.
You say you'll try a softer approach.
A golden glow in the marrow, it shimmers an Art Nouveau webbed metal perspective.
You lean back, inviting a pause to ponder stray black cats along the Rue.
An electrically charged moment embraces our dreams,
locked inside an architectural wonder.
I want to fall into your fire.
Tell you, now or ever,
beyond the Judgment of Paris,
you are the most beautiful woman in the world.
I would surrender my heart to you,
in a Paris Reign.

Poetry by Bart Salamack
Art by Victoria Crayne

Petroglyphs



Carved into volcanic basalt,
Spirit Horse floats across desert rock,
darkly varnished by the gallop of countless years.
Red as the setting sun,
brilliant white blaze.
Wind streams tail and mane into circles of infinity.
Powerful Medicine.
A beautiful, wild thing unbound by time.
Captive only on stone by a Paleolithic mind,
whose paint blown hand an ancient signature summons us here.

Poetry by Francis Aspenwall
Art by Jeanni Nonemaker

Birdsong



I pass an oak tree on my walk,
its rounded crown dense
with the calls of spring birds.
Slowing, I peer through green leaves
to find several dozen
Pacific-slope flycatchers settled
on the inner branches,
small with yellow underbellies.

They remind me
of the birds of Rhiannon,
and I wonder if their melody
will charm me as time
slips by unnoticed.
It might prove restful
to spend months, years even,
captivated by birdsong
without the weight of worry and sorrow.

Shaking my head to dispel these thoughts,
I look up to see the real danger:
a red-tailed hawk
floating,
waiting for the right moment
to pluck a bird (or maybe two)
from their perch.

As I step closer to the tree,
an act of protection,
the flycatchers take wing—
two, three, six at a time,
and spread out into the grassy field behind me.
Their music fades, leaving only the sound
of rustling leaves in a delicate breeze.

Poetry by Steph Rae Moran
Art by Rachel Skinner

Journey to the Moon



Vapor of water
and crystal of ice;
pride of the wind;
they are hills and valleys and plains;
they are the landscape of the sun
and the far fields of the moon.
At the knife edge of whiteness
the earth is rising
while earthmen stand in awe.
The solar wind will blow for eons
and still their tracks will show.

Poetry by Laurence Scott
Art by Diana Huang

Chocolate



Take it away, go and melt in my mouth
Warm and densely rich
As priceless as a gleaming quarter
A soft, milky Golden Snitch
It's freeing
Relieving
And stealing my thunder
I thought I was the loved one
The beautiful, sweet one
But a spotlight constantly shifts
The stage can house more than just
monologues
Hand in hand
We'll take a glorious bow

Poetry by Phoebe Heimendinger
Art by Nicole Shar

Walk Away

Poetry by D. George

Art by Jae Carothers

Sometimes the right thing to do and the
Hardest thing to do are the same.

Drop everything
Walk away

The familiar, the safe,
the tradition, the culture,
the truth, the light

All the foundation
crumbles and falls
out of control

Once considered nourishment
Comfort
Now considered poison
Chains

“Truth” has betrayed
Lies uncovered

The regret, lost time
Never to be redeemed
Heartache

There is light

Not in a tunnel
Not in a book
But in life

Breath
Air
The moment
The knowing

I am free
I walked away



The Box



Within these walls, I am confined,
By the space I'm in, and nothing more
My world reduced to what's defined,
No endless sky or oceans shore.

I long to feel the sun's warm rays,
To explore, to dream, to break free,
To wander through life's winding maze,
From this confinement that's trapping me.

I'm suffocating in this space
Of all the things I'm told to do,
The box too small to hold this chase,
To live up to the point of view.

The weight of it, a crushing force,
I try to rise, but then I fall,
A pressure that leaves me coarse,
The expectations too great, too tall.

Poetry by Lilysa Shar
Art by Coralie Dal Gobbo

Swimming Is Swell



When splashing in the water,
One gets a sort of feeling,
That he is free.
An aquatic type of healing,
Like a calming sport for thee.
With jumps and dives that never falter,
Games and hard sets,
I've never felt better.
Being in the water is pure glee!

Poetry by Olivia Hibbert
Art by Rachel Skinner

Tamales



the masa is spread on the corn husk, the seasoned chicken is added, and the peppers are

tucked into the banana leaves. They collect their fees with sly smiles, rough hands, and

the smell of beer. Everywhere touched, grabbed, slapped, and promised to return when the

tamales were ready. They never came back, long gone, but things linger --

banana plantations, shady men working to be poor, and sons and daughters always asking

questions about fathers they don't know, and the ingredients for the tamales they love.

Poetry by Lorraine Gow
Art by Cassandra Rendon

Immigrants leave things behind. Precious unimportant things: pots, pans, kitchen towels, Tia Elsa's handmade bowl,

the prayers to protect the masa. The smell of dried corn husks. The long walk to cut the banana leaves. The deal made

with the men who cut down the fresh leaves with the understanding that payment will be collected before

In The Garden



The sun, he enveloped her
In a loving embrace.
His warm, brilliant light
Bathed her radiant face.

"My beloved," said the sun.
"Didn't you know?
I gave you beauty for ashes
A long time ago."

Then the birds came and set
A crown of flow'rs in her hair,
And a garment of praise,
The sun gave her to wear.

The girl frolicked and twirled,
Sang with boisterous delight,
"You turned my mourning to dancing,
My darkness to light!"

"With strength and joy," the sun said,
"Carry forward and bloom,
For my love is everlasting
Like a bride to a groom."

It was there in the garden,
Where the girl's heart was restored,
As she danced in the light
Of the sun's love and splendor.

Poetry by Justine Quintos
Art by Raven Loc

'Twas three long years
Before the ice began to melt,
And the girl's heart was restored
With the hope she once felt.

She stepped into the garden,
Lush grass between her toes,
Air fragrant with lavender,
Jasmine and rose.

The butterflies beckoned,
The birds crooned, "Come along."
The girl followed and laughed.
Oh, what joy to belong!

Grey



to grey skies that barricade front doors,
persuade me not to go out

you ask for too much: layers & jackets &
poised umbrella

when fog rests low, paints mountain toes,
pushed up against cliffs
as wind whips from sea, & specks of water
sting air

I slip into monochrome clothes like the grey
& black thundering above

but grey skies aren't grey; they're bright
white, blotting out clouds,
making me squint up searching for sun.

I mourn my old rainy day sweater with
rainbow buttons, here, on the couch.

Poetry by Maya Salem
Art by Dani Rodriguez

Chained



I am chained beyond all reason and doubt.
I don't remember the light of the day.
But I yearn for the time when I'll be let out.
As I wait, that day seems so far away.

There is not a dawn I have not been chained,
Nor a night I could gaze at the bright moon.
There is not a day I have not known pain,
Nor a dusk where my escape would come
soon.

Chains become tighter with each passing
hour.
Cries become louder with no one to hear,
Time keeps me captive as I lose my power.
And now I live life in eternal fear.

Will someone ever hear my dreadful cry?
Or will I remain here until I die?

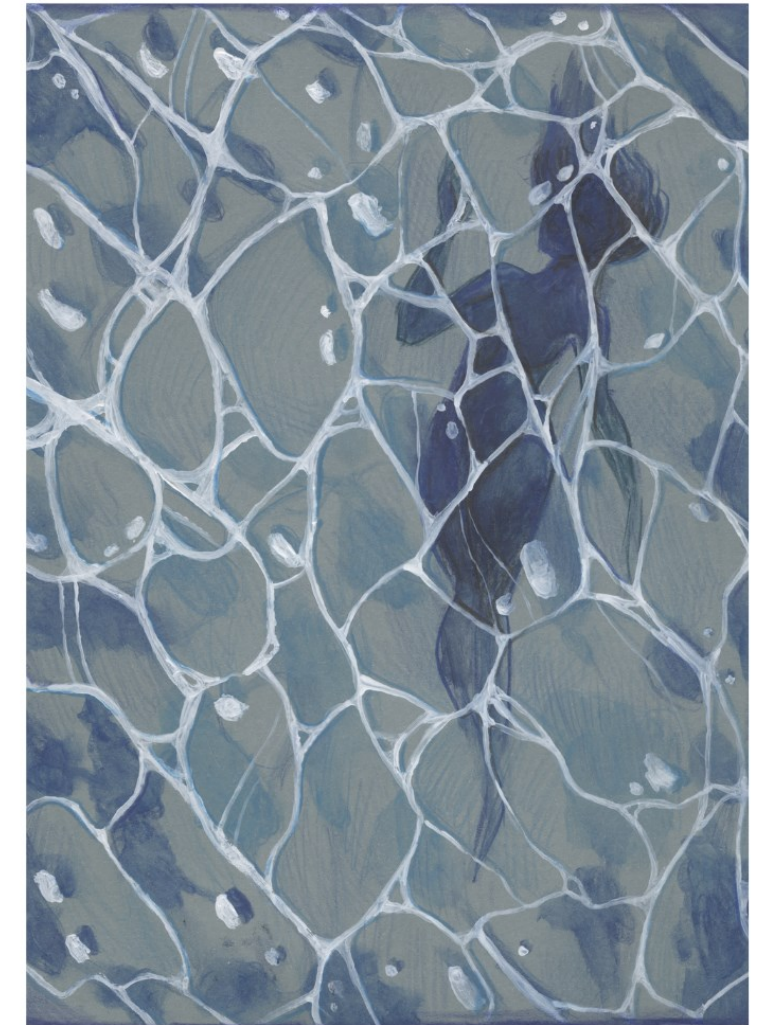
Poetry by Kayla Sakai
Art by Olivia Corning

I hope in your living
you occupy your body
as the storm-fed river
occupies
her banks.

May you be that wild
thing whose rage
makes space.

May this torrent
deafen you to all
save the scream
of your churning waters:
forward.

May the waste
of what is left feed
your full heart's
planting.



Poetry by Cassandra Rendon
Art by Raven Loc

Dewy Walks



Crisp morning walks
Silence isn't silent
Birds ruffling feathers, singing, diving
between dewy branches
Dripping like fat raindrops pattering the
sidewalk
Breezes sweeping wisps of hair into my face
I watch the light change
Bright greens shine through mist slowly
wafting
A glint of blue on the passing jay
Telling me that winter is here
Singing its song
Morning melody sweet to hear
Stepping slow and soft to keep from
breaking this silence
This softness

Poetry by Danielle Boroian
Art by Olivia Corning

Sweet Sacrifice



I'll siphon a siren's song
softly sounding from the sea
if swallowed sweetly,
your Sappho I can be.

Then, I'll harpoon it through your heart
harvest the heavy, hearty pause
hold it in my hand, have it in a jar
Hear it's beat become hollow
Oh, my holiest harbor, hurt no more

Poetry by Jaymie Stopforth
Art by Heather Ikerd



Poetry by Ellie George
Art by Cassandra Rendon

I'm lost

I'm driving in circles

No phone, No food, No sign of life
outside

It's dark, it's cold, and it's raining

It's 1 O'clock in the morning, I'm
scared.

Should I go forward? Left? Right?

Should I turn around? Should I get
out?

I'm wondering

I'm wandering

If I make a choice, would I get out
of here?

Or would I still be wandering?

What happens when strangers collaborate on a creative mission?

Do they remain strangers, or do they form a bond of community?

The Mission Viejo Poetry + Art Collaborative is an interactive project coordinated by the Library and Cultural Services department with the goal of bringing people together through literature and art.

Community members were invited to participate in one of two ways: submit an original poem, or create a piece of visual art inspired by one of those poems.

Participating in this project required curiosity and vulnerability: poets submitted their writing without knowing what kind of art it might inspire, and artists created pieces with no information about the poet who inspired them.

Participants willingly shared a bit of themselves with a total stranger in anticipation of coming together through a shared love of the arts.

This exhibit is the culmination of this creative collaboration, where participants can finally discover each other.

By bringing together people of all ages and walks of life in a project that empowers them to learn, create, and connect, we aim to foster meaningful dialogue, encourage a sense of belonging, and bolster community pride.

The Mission Viejo Library and Cultural Services department wants to thank everyone for their heartfelt and passionate participation in this inaugural program, which we hope to bring back annually!

In the library world, we don't steal ideas - we borrow. I would be remiss if I didn't give credit for the program concept to Vanna Bells and Tania Bolin from the Yuma County Library District in Yuma, Arizona.

The success of their creation sparked the idea to bring it to our community that loves both literature and art, and I am incredibly thankful to Vanna for fielding many texts, phone calls, and emails begging for clarification and guidance.

The library would be nothing without our community partnerships. When I brought the idea to Allison Tran from the Potocki Center for the Arts, it became clear that this collaboration would be the perfect tie-in to both the library and cultural arts; this collaboration really is the epitome of "teamwork makes the dream work."

Thank you for everyone's participation and support, and we so look forward to continuing this project next year (and beyond!).

Lauren Regenhardt, Senior Librarian

As a librarian who has recently moved from the library to the cultural services side of Mission Viejo's Library & Cultural Services department, this project is exactly the kind of collaboration I was hoping to work on - an endeavor that highlights the essential connections between art and literature, encourages lifelong learning, and brings community members together.

Many thanks to Lauren Regenhardt for pitching this wonderful idea and collaborating to secure grant funding to make the dream a reality. We're both grateful to Genesis Hansen, Director of Library & Cultural Services, and our Public Services Manager Sarah Stimson for their continued support as we strive to develop new ways to enrich the community.

I also want to extend my gratitude to everyone who participated in this project. I am amazed by your creativity and talent!

Allison Tran, Library & Cultural Services Supervisor