



**With My Mother
at the
Museum of Fine Arts
Boston**

Four Poems
by
Joyce Wilson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Near the Beach, Shinnecock” appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor*,
“Franklin Park, Boston” in *Ibbetson Street Magazine*. All four poems are
included in the book of poems *The Etymology of Spruce*.

These poems were inspired by the exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston, in 1986, entitled *The Bostonians, Painters of an Elegant Age, 1870 –
1930*.

Cover photograph *June Gardens* by JW.

Gold iris: from my mother’s house in Alexandria, Virginia;

Blue iris: from my father-in-law’s house in Hull, Massachusetts;

Red iris: from our house on Hollett Street, Scituate, Massachusetts.

Copyright ©2016 by Joyce Wilson

The Poetry Porch

www.poetryporch.co

CONTENTS

Near the Beach, Shinnecock, by William Merrit Chase
The Open-Air Breakfast, by William Merrit Chase
Franklin Park, Boston, by Maurice Prendergast
The Artist's Studio, by Childe Hassam

Near the Beach, Shinnecock, by William Merritt Chase

*“An artist’s summer vacation is his busiest, happiest time;
inspiration for the rest of the year.”*

He paints with a frenzy to repeat
the ebullience of summer,
as if one can possess
the zenith of one season
and carry it into the next, can
open a household and fling the children
into a transient world of daylight
flickering on a sapphire sea,
on glossy grass-covered dunes,
on a child’s face and hands, a woman’s windblown dress;
where the shadows are vibrant
lavender, never gray or black;
where each grain of sunlight makes its own color,
its own dazzling swarm,
drawn through the threshold of winter.

The Open-Air Breakfast, by William Merritt Chase

In the painting, breakfast outside
begins at mid-morning. The back yard
has all the accessories of enclosure:
a Japanese screen to soften the brown fence,
a fringed hammock to rest in,
roses on vines the height of eight feet.
The children complete what the adults began,
voicing characters from the melodrama of their lives,
certain that to be silly is to share in the underside
of meaning, while the dog lies in the grass nearby
sleeping off the density of his dreams,
and the sunlight dispels the night's solemn umber;
the absence of roof invites
fluctuations of breezes and light.

I would paint a portrait of you, a widow
for seventeen years, at breakfast alone
on the flagstone terrace
under the bronze shade of the flowering privet,
before sunlit shafts break
over the roof of the gabled house
and you walk to the corner and take a bus
to your office in the city.
How composed you would look
in the emerging light of morning
where the uncut privet blooms.

Franklin Park, Boston, by Maurice Prendergast

*Prendergast loved to paint the movement
and spirit of the public at leisure:
Dorchester, fin-de-siècle, is paradise
in which a park seems a garden*

of light, shimmering, enclosed
where women carry parasols and walk
in the eddying flow of the promenade.
We relish this view of your parents' world.

Move, and the colors on the canvas move.
Squint, and the figures on the landscape change.
*He did not depend on facial expressions
to communicate observations of character.*

The bright parasols have become balloons,
the dresses colorful patterned shirts,
the promenade a soccer game
at Franklin Field where the Haitians play.

Because he left the features blank,
the artist showed more than he knew:
the future prefigured, your world in mine.
Pewter-colored thunderheads approach

like wind-driven smoke from festal flares,
announcing a shift in horizons.
Where paradise provides a luminous energy,
the garden is larger than the frame.

The Artist's Studio by Childe Hassam

The woman on the couch sorts unseen reams of solitude

An arm's reach from objects to paint and to paint with.

Light from the sea bears timbers of airborne motes

Toward the mahogany, a fertile red plain.

Behind the wainscot a mouse unwinds inches of silken fringe.

Masses of sketches, notes, false starts begin

The afternoon drift. He will not come.

Soon she will arise and turn to enter the adjacent world,

To play the part, moved but unmoveable.

With a sower's hand, the clock scatters time.

NOTES

“*Near the Beach, Shinnecock*, by William Merritt Chase”

The epigraph is from the journals of William Merritt Chase as quoted in *American Impressionism* by William H. Gerdts, New York: Abbeville Press, 1984.

“*Franklin Park, Boston*, by Maurice Prendergast”

Lines in italics are from Part III of the essay “Painting in Boston, 1870-1930” in the catalogue to the exhibit, *The Bostonians: Painters of an Elegant Age, 1870-1980*, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1986, and from the flyer to the exhibit.

About the Author

Joyce Wilson, editor and creator of *The Poetry Porch*, a Web site for poets at www.poetryporch.com, has taught English at Suffolk University and Boston University. Her first book of poems *The Etymology of* and a chapbook *The Springhouse* were both published in 2010. Individual poems have appeared in literary journals such as *Ibbetson Street Magazine*, *Poetry Ireland*, and *Salamander*.

≅|||Γ≅
The Poetry Porch
www.poetryporch.com