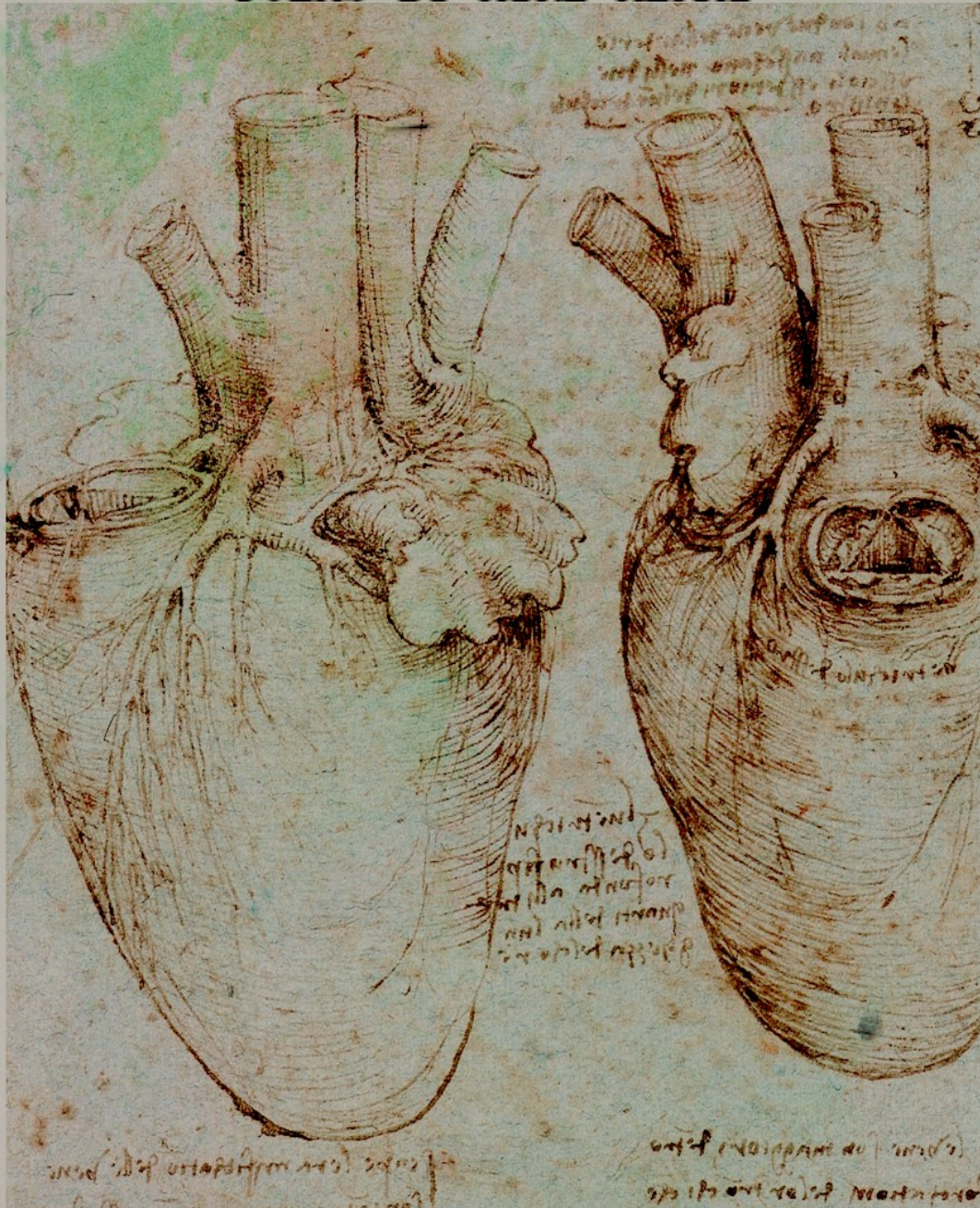


# the art of work

POEMS BY MIKE MERAZ





# **The Art of Work**

**Poems by Mike Meraz**



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## **The Art of Work**

I believe in the work,  
in the gifted art of work,  
be it painting, writing,  
or woodworking.  
I believe in the process,  
in giving birth to the thing,  
knowing you are doing it  
all by yourself,  
you push push push  
and wail,  
and ask "why?"  
then it comes out  
all at once.  
it is beautiful,  
you can't believe your eyes.  
you call it a name,  
give it a title,  
you have given birth,  
to a poem,  
a child,  
a work of art...

and it is beautiful  
and you are beautiful  
and life is beautiful.

at these special times  
it all makes sense.

## **Breadcrumbs**

it became too muddled  
too ego centered  
rather than heart felt.  
I promise not to go that way.  
I promise to stay at home  
and not head to the big city.

in “sophistication” we think  
the heart and things to do with the heart  
are silly and pointless.  
but ah, friend, these are the things that really matter,  
that give hope, that take away the sting of the vicious  
businessman or the opportunist pig.

so bring back the sunset, bring back the open road  
bring back sprawling on the living room floor  
writing poetry and drawing pictures.  
bring back the innocence of the dream and the optimism  
of making a difference.

## **You Will Insist**

you will insist  
I am doing it all wrong.  
you will insist  
there is another way.  
but in the unparticular  
there is neither right or wrong,  
just gray.  
I agree in some things  
there is a basis,  
a foundation  
we must all build upon.  
but in the unparticular  
it does not matter.  
what matters is the painter.  
what he sees fit to paint.  
the expression of his heart  
coming out on canvas.  
the personality of his soul  
being put down on paper.

if it is honest,  
it is true.

if it is contrived,  
it is a lie.



## **The World Needs New Orleans**

in New Orleans  
if you look anywhere  
you will see the words  
“be nice or leave.”

or in front of the bars  
the sign does not read  
“Happy Hour”  
but “Lost dog. See bartender inside.”

this is what people love  
about New Orleans:  
non-commercialism,  
non-capitalism.

it is the girl next door you never married.  
it is the eternal perch for you to rest on.

you won't get rich here  
but the world does not need  
another money-maker.

## **Enough Cigarettes To Last A Week**

the uselessness of the pen.  
enough cigarettes to last a week.  
the ability to go to the cafe  
anytime I please.  
I am a man of simple means.  
I do not expect much.  
I do not ask for much.  
I find a universe of wonder  
in the simple things,  
like this blank piece of paper,  
filling up,  
giving meaning  
to my life  
and yours.

## **New Orleans Blues**

it is a healthy blues,  
that is why the city  
is so rich in culture.

you take sadness  
and feed it with  
grits and butter.

even the most  
shoddy food store  
is stocked with  
gourmet foods.

carrot souffle  
homemade banana  
pudding  
red beans and rice  
lemon chicken and  
three bean salad.

ah, there is the devil  
playing guitar  
on the corner.

he looks happy.

## **Best Tits On The Block**

there are odd names  
in the French Quarter.

names like:

"Cupcakes"

"Buttercup"

"Sunshine."

there is even a  
"best tits on the block."

the odd women of the world  
come to New Orleans.

they walk by you  
and ask you questions  
like:

"my, you're a quiet one."

and

"how come you never talk?"

I stand there amazed  
at boobs  
at tits  
at ass.

and the loveliness  
of their voice.

I don't want them,  
most men don't  
want them.

there is a loneliness  
in their eyes  
that they will  
never belong  
to anyone.

just the  
streets

just the  
streets.

## **Life In New Orleans**

in New Orleans  
there is just a little more butter  
in everything  
the food is richer  
the music louder  
the women more cunning and voluptuous  
the lifestyle more reckless and out of control.

in New Orleans  
there is just a little more butter in everything.

this being  
the condoms are thicker  
the streets meaner  
the suicide rates higher  
the hospital visits soaring  
the cops more jaded.

I once saw one hustling a crack addict  
for a hundred dollar bill.

this is life in New Orleans'...

## **How You Know When You Are A Writer**

someone once asked me,  
"how do you know when you are a writer?"

I told them,  
"you know you are a writer  
when there is a 160 lb. Brazilian girl  
laying next to you, with little on,  
telling you how much she cares about you  
while at the same time, in your head,  
you are working on your latest  
sonnet."

## Night

purple  
red  
scar

lying  
on a  
bed

head  
on a  
pillow

dreaming  
of  
love.



## **Frenchman and Orleans**

watching Youtube  
I have my favorites

Dave Chappelle  
Beatles Documentary  
Schizophrenic: Heather

I log into Facebook  
and see people talking  
through wires

I am anti-social  
technically  
and in real time

I have time for no one  
except maybe  
that beautiful Spanish girl  
I saw crossing the  
street today  
on the corner of  
Frenchman and Orleans.

## OJOS

too many women over the years  
have told me how pretty my eyes are.

"oh, how pretty your eyes are,"  
they would say.

then they would proceed to scoop them  
out of my eye sockets  
and play with them.

"oh," they would say,  
"they are so blue and round."

## **Somewhere Between God and The Devil**

somewhere between God and the devil  
each man searches  
for his own niche, his own groove  
in the pavement of life.  
(some find it, some don't).

somewhere between God and the devil  
each woman searches for a man  
who has found his own niche, his own groove  
in the pavement of life.  
(some find him, some don't).

## Advertisement

the  
emotions  
of  
women  
are  
bigger  
than  
mountains.

their  
hormones  
are  
jet  
liners.

their  
feelings  
are  
large  
automobiles.

climb  
one,

fly  
one,

drive  
one,

today!

## **Workin' For The Oldies**

the oldies sit in the  
highbrow restaurant  
talking about  
marvelous things.

I walk by in  
old shorts,  
Wal-Mart shoes  
and uncut hair.

I am a writer  
hoping one day  
to be the subject  
of their conversation.

## **Singlehood**

we smoke cigarettes in the house.  
we are alone  
and loving it.

## **An Observation**

I am sure you have seen it before,  
a man and a woman embracing  
and it seems the woman does not want to let go.  
I never understood this,  
this woman holding onto this man so tight  
like he is the only thing left  
keeping her alive.  
it is sad, I think, how she loves him so much.  
he might break her heart, or worse,  
string her along for convenience.  
whenever I see a sight like this I feel sad,  
because it is always bad  
when we allow a human being  
to become our only source  
of happiness.

## **Some People Have No Class**

the most repulsive thing  
I ever heard  
was in a men's restroom  
in Barnes and Noble.

an old man had his ear up  
to one of the stalls  
and he said,

"what is he making in there?  
an omelet?"



## Up And Alone

up and alone  
at midnight  
my back  
towards the floor  
my eyes  
fixed on darkness  
recalling dreams  
of murder  
of torture  
of bliss.  
disappointed  
this night will end  
I swing my legs  
to the floor  
I get up  
and light a cigarette  
for an instant  
the flame  
lights up the room  
then is gone  
just like my life  
my soul  
and everyone  
I have ever loved.

## **Ode To Caroline**

I ride my bike through the streets of New Orleans  
even though I am dying  
I ride my bike through the streets of New Orleans  
even though I am thinning  
I ride my bike through the streets of New Orleans  
even though I am weightless  
I ride my bike through the streets of New Orleans  
I am nothing

*This poem is dedicated to a woman I know who rides her bike every day through the streets of NOLA even though she knows she is dying of Leukemia. I think it is a testament to the human spirit that even though faced with death she is still determined to do those things she enjoys.*

## **The Machine Gun Vs. The Atomic Bomb**

I feel muddled.  
I haven't written anything all day.  
while other poets write  
5 poems a day,  
I think,  
all I need is one bomb,  
one bomb to blow  
this place  
apart.

## **The Law Of Diminishing Returns**

a hand shake  
turns into  
a hug  
turns into  
a kiss  
turns into  
a fuck  
turns into  
a marriage  
turns into  
a divorce  
turns into  
a handshake

fifty-five, he looks like  
he's forty-five  
lifting those weights.  
Marlon Brando eyes,  
standing there  
in a white t-shirt,  
against a screen  
looking at me  
with such indifference.

I do not recognize him.

his heart usually beats loud,  
and his face always shines  
with fatherly love.  
but on this day  
with the weight of death,  
loss and the drama  
of new love  
resting on his shoulders,  
he looks at me for once  
and does not smile.

I do not recognize him.

## **Mother, I'm All Alone**

mother, I'm all alone.  
let me sit on top of the kitchen counter  
and listen to you speak.

mother, I'm all alone.  
let me peek through the crack  
in the bathroom door  
and watch you put on your make-up.

mother, I'm all alone.  
kiss me on the back of the neck  
or pass by while I watch TV.

twist and writhe on the living room couch  
while father begs you to come back  
and I tell you to leave.

**At 37**

at 37

I am still doing  
physical labor.

at 37

I am doing  
market boy  
work.

at 37

I have grown into  
something special  
while being the most  
unimportant  
thing  
on earth.

## Dead Roses

I put a bouquet of dead roses  
on her doorstep  
tied to a two page letter  
filled with anger, hate, rage  
and at the end a gut wrenching  
confession of unconditional love.

of course, the next day she called.

"much respect to you, you are a good writer,"  
she said.

"I thought you'd like that," I said.

"but I'm not leaving him."

"I do not want you to."

"but I thought you said you loved me."

"I do but love does not mean we have to be  
together. I can love you from afar."



## **Stop Tinkering With It!**

yeah, everything.  
your relationship.  
your job.  
your face.  
your art.

just kick back for a while.  
everything will work itself out.  
just chill.

## **These Cats Have Me Whipped**

these cats have me whipped,  
they sit and purr around my neck,  
my ankles.  
they follow me at dawn  
and arrive spry and lovely  
at dinner time.  
they have me by the neck.  
"food" they say  
in their cat-like way.  
I am broke and homeless.  
the bills haven't been paid.  
I give them my last dollar  
dressed in a can of sardines.  
"eat eat, chomp chomp,  
you are better to me than any woman."

## **A Life Without Love**

a life without love.  
not many friends.  
my family sticks by me  
but family love only goes so far.  
this is the meat and potatoes of love  
but meat and potatoes is boring.  
I want gourmet with fine wine,  
with all the trimmings.  
I want dessert,  
not just vanilla ice cream  
but a hot fudge sundae  
topped with peanuts.  
I want the cherry on top.  
I want the excitement of love.  
I want the beautiful girl  
with olive skin  
walking across my room  
in a black satin dress,  
telling me,  
"it stinks in here,"  
as I pour her a glass of 85  
Chardonnay.

## **Buds of Growth**

the real artists  
haven't made it  
but are struggling...

like a flower  
coming up  
from the first  
rain...

the buds of growth  
the buds of growth.

## **Mine**

mine,  
it's all I have,  
this moment,  
this time,  
to make it right.

mine,  
it's all I have,  
this existence,  
this flesh,  
this bone,  
to offer up,  
to lay down,  
to open up,  
to write down,  
to give to you.

Mike Meraz lived in New Orleans for some years. He currently lives and writes in Los Angeles, Ca.

Other Books by Mike Meraz:

Black-Listed Poems

All Beautiful Things Travel Alone

Watching It Burn

Black-Listed Thoughts

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Published by Lost & Found Press for

Take-it-to-the-street-poetry