

Cherry Pickman

On Cognitive Dissonance

You go to the art show, which is in memoriam
of the dead artists the one whose death was
accidental, the other one

not so much. It isn't enough to know
that someone died, we need to know how
in order to distance ourselves

from any mortal likelihood. Can the sculpture act
as political barometer? Even the poem has borders.
The long walks you expose your skin to

hoping to perfume yourself with place are
taking you nowhere, are greening your
sensibilities, which should not be confused

with growth. There's always a song somewhere
thrumming in invisible frequencies, there's
the light that looks like a certain memory, which

reminds you to avoid such vagaries, to pin
the tail despite the blindfold, to lead
the donkey directly to its paddock. And this effort,

the daily tally where you have picked things up
and put them in the proper stacks is what,
an attempt to resolve reality? What our memory

omits is for our own gain—our minds congested
with habit, our fingertips insist, force
each task. While above you

the storm cloud will not give, but grants us
darkness. You dressed carefully
for the show, considered each layer. For a second

you mistake the sculpture's mouth for
a cradle. What other misapprehensions
have led you here?

Cherry Pickman

Cherry Pickman is the author of *Theory of Tides*, winner of the Poetry Society of America's Chapbook Fellowship. Her work has appeared in, or is forthcoming from, *32 Poems*, *American Poetry Review*, *Bennington Review*, *Boston Review*, *Dossier*, *Indiana Review*, *Jai-Alai Magazine*, and *PEN*, among others. A selection of her poems was included in *Eight Miami Poets* (2015), an anthology published by Jai-Alai Books. She has been shortlisted for the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, and has been a finalist for the Snowbound Chapbook Competition, The Missouri Review Editors Prize; and, most recently, her full-length collection, *Islanders*, was a semifinalist for the Alice James Book Award. Pickman is a graduate of Columbia University's MFA program; she lives and works as an arts editor in Miami.