

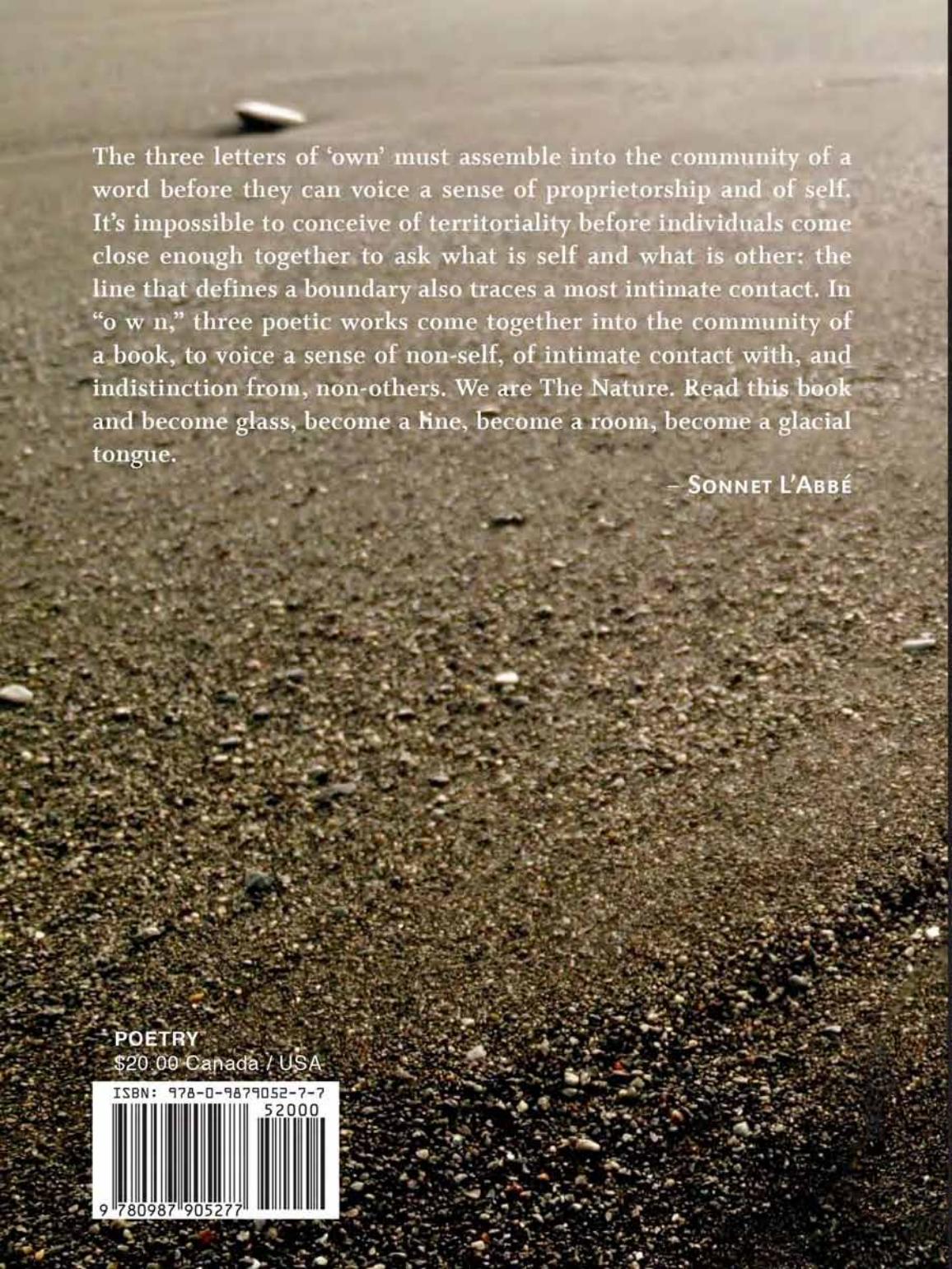
own

a rawlings

Heather Hermant

Chris Turnbull





The three letters of 'own' must assemble into the community of a word before they can voice a sense of proprietorship and of self. It's impossible to conceive of territoriality before individuals come close enough together to ask what is self and what is other: the line that defines a boundary also traces a most intimate contact. In "o w n," three poetic works come together into the community of a book, to voice a sense of non-self, of intimate contact with, and indistinction from, non-others. We are The Nature. Read this book and become glass, become a line, become a room, become a glacial tongue.

— SONNET L'ABBÉ

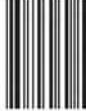
POETRY

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poems for glass

Heather Hermant



in this ether
lightning falls
like dust
like phosphorescence
living



into this
departure
[blue]
silhouettes
on tongues
of

there is
nothing
that can
catch me



if this wall were

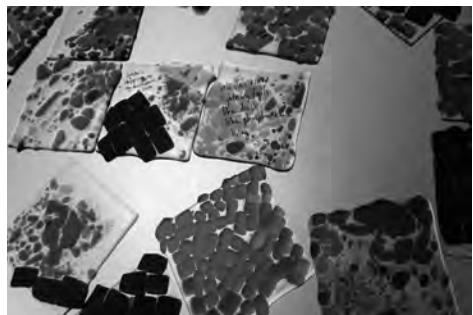
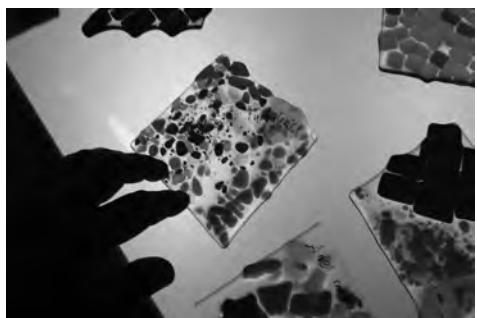




all this haemoglobin
herded
toward
oxygen

a glass galaxy

reordering
when light falls through
such taut and fragile collisions
the sound of particles gyrating
eavesdropped upon
microscopically
the speed of light
the sound of the speed of light
falling through
re-ordering
such taut and fragile collisions,
light

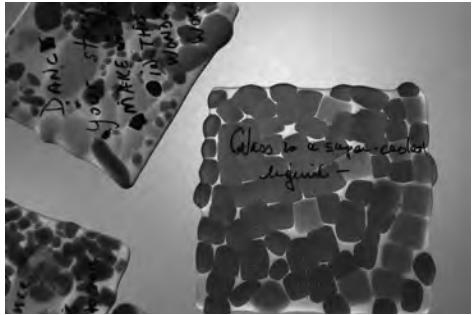
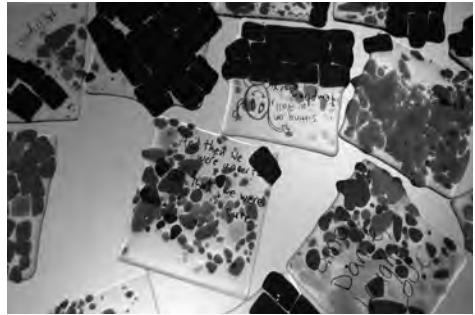




hope

just a river's motion: that way

it looks like a cross between cellular activity
and press-on nails



The Glass Delusion

in fields of uncertainty
precarious measures
to mount a defence
against shatter
or
even less
the force of the threat

of a hairline fracture
what fault lines fall
across skin
across broken
across maybe this time
I will break

the self a series of hairline fractures
fused by faith, the need to be,
a fear of breaking
bodies made of glass
transparent as the house
without mortar

“In the Middle Ages,” writes Helen from England,
“there was an ailment known as the grand delusion.”

Well, no. She wrote The Glass Delusion.

People, she says, felt they were made of glass and feared they would shatter.
The body an illusion of fortitude, transparent as a house without mortar.

King Charles V of France would not allow people to touch him,
wore reinforced clothing to prevent accidental shattering.

Now, why would a man so powerful ...

Concentration of the Glass Delusion among the wealthy and educated classes
allowed modern scholars to associate it with a wider and better described disorder,
The Scholar’s Melancholy.

Imminent danger, loss, disgrace.

In the Middle Ages,
says Melina,
maybe they felt themselves to be
those figures on stained glass,
felt so close they became
the glass spirit of,

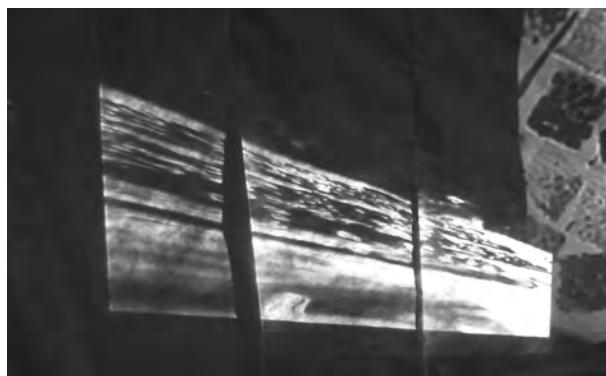
representation,
embodied representation
and so
felt themselves impermanent

only the rich had glass in their vicinity
a radiance so rare it might take you
a wealth so rare
it might break you

Osteogenesis imperfecta,
writes one blogger,
brittle bones from the malnutrition
of the Middle Ages
gone with the discovery of vitamin D

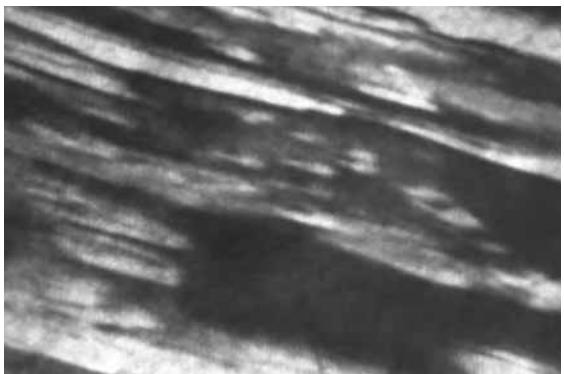
If The Glass Delusion,
the fear of being made of glass
so close to shatter
was a disorder suffered only in the Middle Ages
then what is our own glass delusion?

i fear i am what?
and so what will befall me?



i fear i am the Earth
and so am toxic
life upon me decaying
radiant and irreproducible
semillas asesinas
no, this is not a glass delusion
terminator seeds
a human creation
reassembling DNA
in order to break it
for profit

the fear that gods made
the unwillingness of angels
proxies not near enough
yet too close, calling





the underglo, the underglo
a glass seduction,
atmospheric



the space between particles
a terror of solitude
or a thrilling proximity
depending on scale



the history of mirrors
a reflecting surface
that forms an image
of an object when light
rays coming from that object
fall upon the surface

i fear i am the object
reflected refracted
in pieces here,
looking

The glossed elusion
elysian
that if we were to break
into bits, be broken
to bits, that we
would hold the future
of our own reassembly

tumbling into
my own touch
pieces of shatter,
their refusion
the thrill of making

barely blood
and why only here?



the glass'd elusion

how to fake disappearance
in a transparent house



this parallelogram
is not an accident

only an angle
meeting other angles
and finding the
silence of encounter

the way a glacier
spends millennia
carving a path
to its extinction
yes, that's it
the way time
compounds
until a breath is
eternity



looks
like
candy

this one



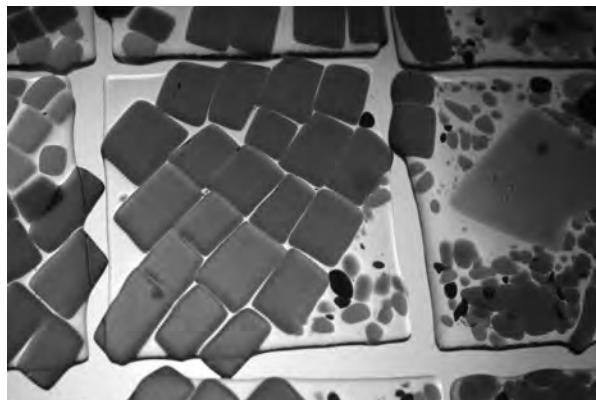
detritus
never looked
so good

the city does not
look like this,
suspended in so much
arresting colour,
an accidental
composition
almost perfect.
only in micromoments
do i know something like this.

what does
broke
look like
in fused glass?

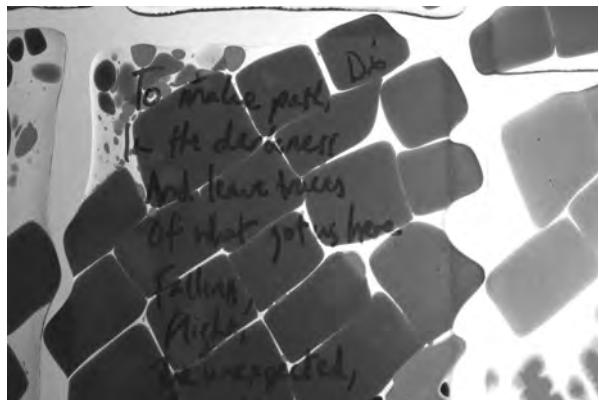
a fist,
a long pre-dawn commute,
the inaccessible language
of paperwork,
banks, waiting in
uncertainty for
admission.





brick walls don't glow
in the dark.
but it is possible
to make paths
in the darkness
and leave traces
of what got us here:

falling,
flight,
the unexpected,
a decision,
another decision,
loss,
someone,
this body,
this hierarchy,
you.



glass house
on a glass lake
glass towers
glass horizon
a break

glass tracks
the wheels
glass boat
frozen water
glass feet

floating across
glass horizon
glass bird
bird's beak
a frozen twig

icicle
the sound
as it breaks

this is a thing

that i ask for
a request
a small desire
barely
a breath
just this
what
i want
in this moment

need
just a thing
a thought
a hope
all i'm asking
just this
now

it seems
like never
but almost
only this
please
yes

barely anything
nothing really
only this
almost nothing

at all
just

are you
listening?

dare me.
dare me games
that crack my spine
without the trail of injury
by brazen steps
across what can't
be known and pull me
under.

dare me to slip through these barricades.
not by passing in the night.
not stealth.
not sseriptitious.
but by full light of day.
descend me.
dare me.

An octopus appears, by all accounts
more (or better) intelligent than me
can listen with skin to inert objects
on the ocean's floor
and in an instant become them,

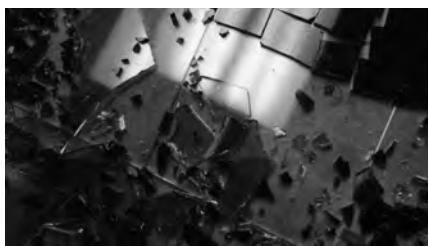
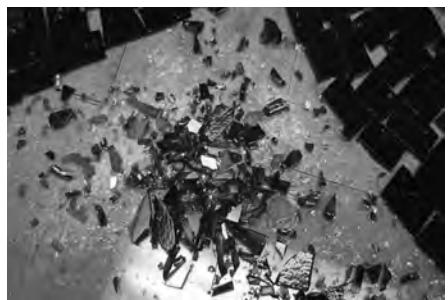
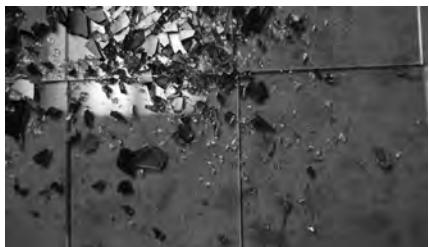
A world on a moment's notice,
inherits landscapes on its surface
without colonizing it seems
and when danger passes, moves
as something else

But an octopus cannot survive
past its own reproduction
and so each birth
is an evolutionary rewind
a trajectory that cannot build
on transmitted knowledge

But starts from scratch
each time a navigation acquired
purely in body
then gone.



How do you know
this is not
an octopus?



Extinccio vitreum:
A memorial in glass
to Lake Ontario's lost species

Stizostedion vitreum glacum
Sander vitreus glaucus
an opaque glass fish, carnivorous, blue
spotted to extinction
and gone by 1983

the year Reagan
launched Star Wars
Thatcher won by a landslide
and the U.S. invaded Grenada
a fistful of nuclear accidents and scares
and power lining up its axes

Coregonus reighardi
the shortnose cisco
of the salmon family
native to the Great Lakes
a fish memorialized in a corporate name?
formerly found
in Lakes Huron, Michigan and Ontario

no individuals collected since 1985

the year the world received
the first autofocus
single-reflex camera
better to more precisely capture
a vanishing world
in the moment before
the instant went digital,
a relegation.

who took the last picture
of the unremarkable blue pike,
or the shortnose cisco?
the eighties were bad years
for extinction

unlike species
decades return
short-term memory
neo-cons
my gold zippered
Michael Jackson pants
i always knew they would cycle back

Extinccio vitreum:

A memorial in glass
(if I could only bring back)

cassette tapes
for the art of the mix
the dedication to radio listening
the endurance required
to capture the song

shorelines
that used to be
further in
and the paths that used to know
no fences
property lines
the legalese of abutment
and right of way
just the way,
on foot

and home, closer to it
the lake, everyone's
horizon,
and clean

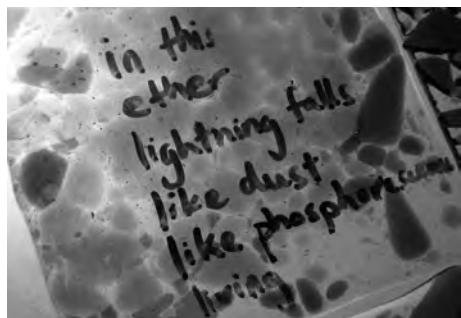
well, the land remembers
so this is on the wrong list
a thought calling up
recognition of presence
and with recognition
responsibility



ten thousand particles of memory
hovering



each one of these stones
a memorial
the thing placed
is colour
on transparency
so that the transparency itself
becomes visible



Tkaronto:
where the trees
are standing in the water

Toronton:
il y en a beaucoup
a place of meetings

Turtle Island,
swimming

a single cell carrying a world
swimming
and the world shifting its weight

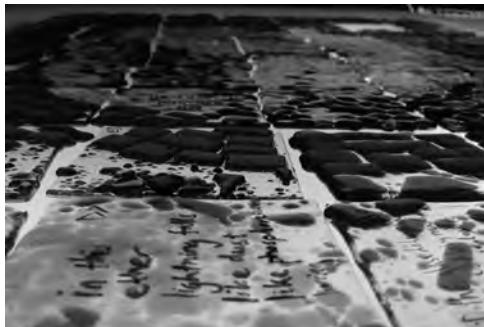
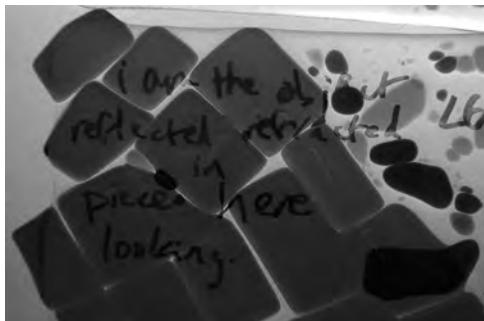
so much colour on colour
it becomes unclear
whether and where
the ocean's floor meets
the earth underfoot
a viscous continuum
floating, intuitive,
millenial

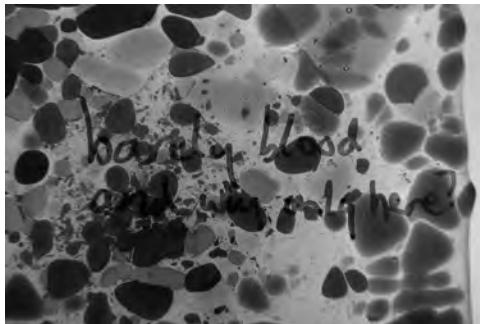
an uncertain foothold and
the tumble inconsequential
small
glass folds over the edges
sure to touch an underside,
reaching three-dimensional

if these are cellular press-on nails
then on each red rectangular
i would like painted
a replica in miniature
of an entire adjacent tile

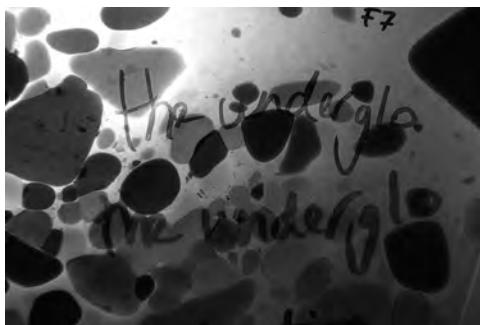
and then i would like
to affix these miniatures
on the gallery of each of these
available fingers

and then i would like to choreograph
these miscellaneous fingers
in a lightboard cabaret so delicious
it would be impossible
not to break our teeth,
intoxicated





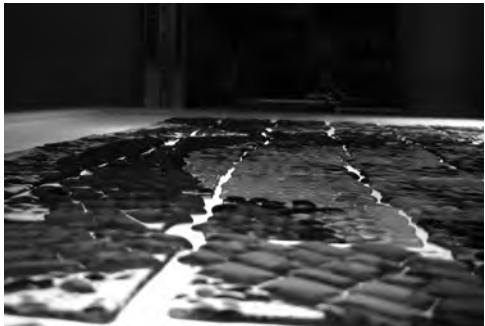
these are like rooms
the things that happen
stoned by the imagination



these are what archeological tablets
draw up in the mind of a child
unaware of history but aware
of the possibilities of a body
that is eras and the world and
that cascade of creatures
living in night dreams
that confirm a much older story

a knowledge not relearned with each birth
but deepened through the thickness
of ancestors watching
a thousand memories hovering
like wind in the recesses of a canvas
painting the story behind closed eyes

like a crystal of salt
of sugar
dissolving on the tongue
burning,
delicious

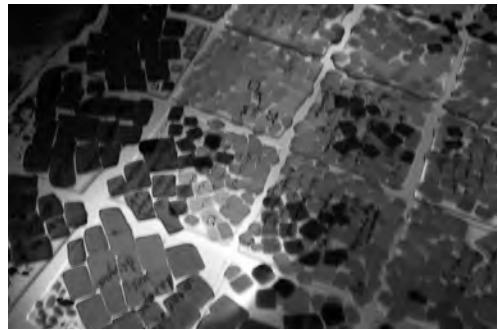


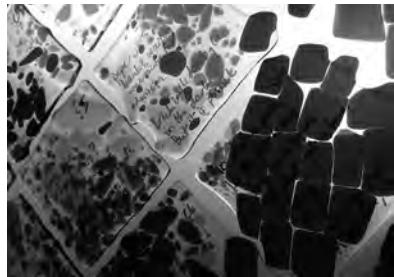
the best part
is when the words
are wiped away
a dissolving
into substrate
so much more certain
than what i inscribe





like the undersurface,
the origin of thought,
and also its memory
which pulls me in again,
deciphering,
feeling

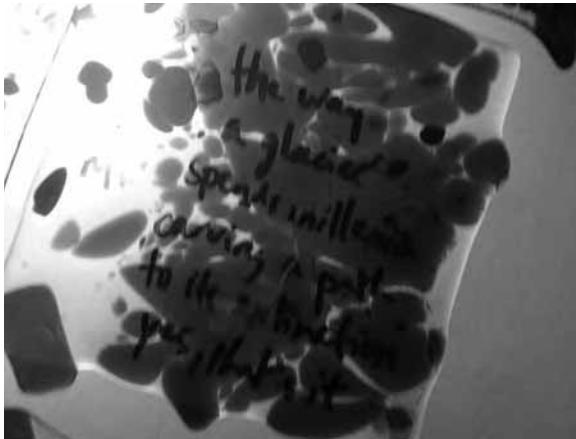
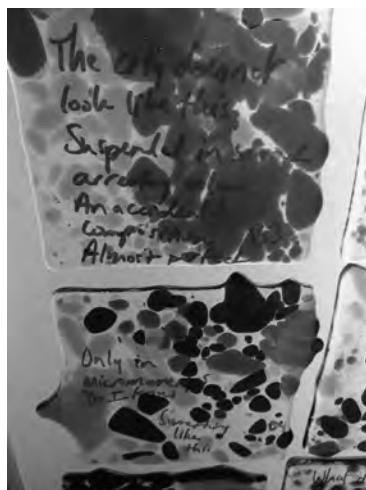




• this parallelogram
is not an accident
only an angle
meets other angles
and finding the
silence of erosion



the epicentre
of an eruption





will words float me

poems for glass were written on close to one hundred fused glass tiles on a light-board created for the interactive performance installation *Nice Bumping Into You*, co-conceived and created by Heather Hermant and glass artist Melina Young. *Nice Bumping Into You* was commissioned by Diaspora Dialogues for Future City with Humber School of Creative and Performing Arts, and exhibited at Gardiner Museum, Nuit Blanche, Toronto, October 2-3, 2010. The installation also featured a soundtrack from creation of the glass, and my periodic live spoken word performance. Spy cameras on and above the table projected close-ups, retexturing the installation's life onto a giant wave form surface created by Heather Kent. The images document the process of the tiles' creation; my writing process on the tiles prior to the installation going public; and live action at Nuit Blanche, where hundreds of visitors wrote on the tiles, and few chose to erase the inscriptions of others.

All text in *poems for glass* by Heather Hermant. Photos by David Findlay, Heather Hermant and Melina Young.



