

KIRKUS

REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

ARTSCAPES

Lee Woodman
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BOOK REVIEW

A wide-ranging volume of poetry celebrates the arts.

Woodman, winner of the 2020 William Meredith Award in Poetry, immerses readers in the arts in this fourth installment of her Scapesseries. Drawing inspiration from a variety of mediums, including painting, sculpture, and music, the ekphrastic poems are steeped in vivid imagery and inventive wordplay. In the opening piece, "Mark Rothko, I Challenge Your Claim," the author contemplates Rothko's 1955 painting Untitled: "I ask you, 'Why 'Untitled?' / Would you not name a friend or / a child born, 1955? Here's what I see: / ochre-brown, black mouth screaming." Chelsea Welsh's photograph Caught in the Days Unraveling is the inspiration for "A Life Unravels With the Day," a haunting meditation on life and death viewed through the lens of a woman battling cancer: "A barren life / her scalp will know, / when all is lost, / the cancer slow." Woodman's poems are written in a free verse style, which allows experimentation with form and content. In "Story Tower," inspired by Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade, each stanza is separated by a single line that, when read together, forms a poem within a poem. In the whimsical "The Underside of Color," inspired by Marc Chagall's 1913 painting Paris Through the Window, the artist invites the author to his home because "he knows I love this painting." The artistry of music is the focus of "Stand Under a Willow" and "A Kind of Gospel." Inspired by Stevie Wonder's classic "Superstition," Woodman offers thoughtful life lessons in "Stand Under a Willow": "Some have sipped the nectar / To make a healing brew / Learn from their traditions / Change your point of view." The concluding poem, "A Kind of Gospel," is a stirring, soulful contemplation of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" and how the song continues to inspire artists and listeners alike: "And now in our time of plague / more and more faces in sequestered places / come on line one by one, pleading / Hallelujah."

A richly textured collection that invites readers into the wonderful world of culture.