

WHAT'S INSIDE

"WHAT DOES IT MEAN for a poet to be a musician or a musician to be a poet: How are these two things—poetry and music—linked?" asks Emily Raboteau in her 2009 Bechtel Prize-winning essay, featured in this issue. Raboteau's exploration of these questions—in a dingy, overcrowded college classroom in Harlem, with students who are immigrants, students who have full-time jobs in addition to school, students who are already supporting children of their own—gets at the heart of what poetry—and the arts—have to offer. Just asking the question can open a window, as Raboteau would have it, where before there was only a wall.

The poetry of Jayne Cortez—"bawdy, lively, funny, bold"—creates a similar opening for the students in Joanna Fuhrman's New York City classroom, letting them know that nothing is off-limits in poetry. In her article and her interview with Cortez, Fuhrman shows us why, as a teacher, she calls Cortez's work her "secret weapon."

A pair of "In the classroom" pieces by two writers from Writers-in-the-Schools (WITS) Houston offer exercises for elementary school students that help develop solid writing skills while making the process lively and fun.

Marion Winik closes out the issue with a wonderful and funny guide to help her fellow nonfiction writers steer clear of the tricky shoals that have sunk more than a few recent memoirs.

In a recent keynote address, incoming National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman said the guiding principle that will inform his work at the agency can be summed up in two words: "art works." As the pieces in this issue clearly show, we couldn't agree more.

— Susan Karwoska

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Front and back cover art: Reading Light, by Molly Schwartz: still from a vertical wall-sized projection of a bookshelf full of books and animated dioramas of current and historical Brooklyn, combining photos from neighborhood walks with drawings, paintings, and animation. In spring 2007, Reading Light was projected as a site-specific public video installation in the Brooklyn Central Library.