



## Hourglass Museum

*Kelli Russell Agodon*

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"Lyrical, intelligent, magical, and honest, the poems are both of this world and out of this world. Her uniquely true and mystical voice is like a glass of pure water: refreshing, healing, and oh, so necessary."—Nin Andrews

"Her poems are an intense vision of the power of art to heal, to help us understand ourselves and our world. Agodon invokes artists as disparate as Kahlo and Cornell, Picasso and Pollock, as a way into the world she creates for us in her deft and musical poems. She brilliantly succeeds."—Wyn Cooper

**Kelli Russell Agodon** is the author of two previous collections of poetry and lives in Kingston, Washington.

## Hourglass Museum Details

Date : Published February 11th 2014 by White Pine Press (first published October 1st 2010)

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Author : Kelli Russell Agodon

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## From Reader Review Hourglass Museum for online ebook

### Susan says

#### Art to Poetry

This author has a very interesting way to look at different works of art. The poetry she writes is beautiful. I love the word imagery. Each poem is talking about a certain painting. She can really bring the paintings to life. I really like her poetic style.

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### John Burroughs says

I've read around 20 poetry books so far this year, and this may well be my favorite. I need to read it again.

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### Hailey Ann says

I checked my mail today and found this in my box. I won it in a Goodreads giveaway, and to be honest, my hopes weren't high. (I'm too cynical for my own good- I feel like if it's free, it can't be any good.)

I was SO pleasantly surprised. This is one of the most stunning things I have ever read. It's too easy to do poetry badly, and poetry like this is rare. It resonated with me on so many different levels. Recommended to all. Stunning. Absolutely stunning.

If I had to choose one specific poem that stuck with me, I would say Frida Kahlo Tattoo. However, I'm not exaggerating when I say that I adored every poem in this book. Kelli Russell Agodon has most definitely become one of my new favorite poets. I admire her work and her ability to create something so beautiful, and yet so easy to relate to.

Thank you, Goodreads, for giving me this book. I probably would have never stumbled upon it on my own, and I am so glad I got the chance to discover it. I'll be recommending it to all my friends, family, neighbors, strangers, people passing in the streets...

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### Michelle says

Wonderful book, full of heart and tenderness. I enjoyed every minute of reading it.

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### Andrea Blythe says

*Hourglass Museum* by Kelli Russell Agodon was the April read for Jessie Carty's Poetry Book Club — and

it was so yummy.

*"If you think you are the mermaid, think again.  
You are the ocean holding the mermaid afloat,  
trying to change the world one dolphin at a time."*  
— from the poem "Souvenir Boxes"

Agodon's poetry explores a variety of themes within *Hourglass Museum*. As the title suggests, art is an important source of inspiration here (as can also be seen in the long list of notes at the end of the book), with poems referencing great artists such as Frida Kahlo and Andy Warhol. The idea of preservation, via canvass, poem, or as a collection in a museum, of moments captured and held in stasis through artifice and creation are a constant in these poems.

*"Dark matter angels mingle over oceans  
and bubbling cities filled with unopened jars,  
all we had were cupboards and cupboards  
of challenges."*  
— from the poem "A Moment Ago, Everything Was Beautiful"

The outward inspiration of art and museums, is drawn into the personal scope of Agodon's personal life, both her inner emotional realm and the outer realm of home and family and relationships. This connection between art and home works well, since as human being we often take memories and put them on the shelves of our minds, we collect pieces of anger and store them for later use, attach joy to simple objects, return to each of them again and again, revisit, and Agodon's poetry reflects this.

*"I place solitude in a frame on my desk  
and call it, The one I love."*  
— from the poem "Line Forms Here"

She explores a variety of emotional states, including depression and loneliness. The language beautifully expresses these emotions and allowed me to connect with them personally. I could see myself in these moments of darkness and in the ways a write approaches such moments, especially through pen. I think these feelings are approachable from a variety of perspectives, allowing many kinds readers to feel them.

*"There's no dessert in the picnic basket,  
so I swallow time. My mouth is full  
of hands and numbers. I ask for seconds."*  
— from the poem "Drowning Girl: A Waterlogged Ars Poetica"

And yet, there is a sense of humor throughout, too, a poking of fun at the supposed importance of depression, so that such darker subjects cannot drag down the reader and instead allow them to explore and transverse the state. It brings a lightness to the poems that makes them great to read.

*"I escape disaster by writing a poem with a joke in it:  
The past, present, and future walk into a bar — it was tense."*  
— from the poem "Sketchbook with an Undercurrent of Grief"

All in all, this was a wonderful collection and, though I own it in digital format, I'm contemplating buying it again in print format as well, just so I can add the tactile sensation to my enjoyment of the book.

*"Madness is a meaningful way to exist."*  
— from the poem "Menacing Gods: An Abstract"

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### **Kate says**

'I said your world was too mainstream/ so I made my own'

I love Agodon's honesty mixed with the surreal. You don't need to know of the art that is talked of in this collection, but I imagine it is even better if you do.

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### **Amanda says**

*"Sometimes darkness  
is the beauty I am made of --  
It's January and I've locked the doors,  
I'm refusing to answer the phone.  
Sometimes when I'm absent  
of Vitamin D, the staircase murmurs:  
"Jump."  
Sorry, the life you ordered  
is temporarily out of stock.  
Most winters it's easier to hibernate,  
clean the windows in my mind.  
Imagination: Taking madness and giving it a loving home."*

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### **Donna says**

There's much to admire about Hourglass Museum, but here's what I loved most: Kelli Russell Agodon is just charmingly and elegantly clever with words. Hers There's much to admire about Hourglass Museum, but here's what I loved most: Kelli Russell Agodon is just charmingly and elegantly clever with words. Hers is not the look-at-me, jokey kind of cleverness, but the kind that emerges seemingly without effort to stun you with its grace and aptness. I read these lines over and over from the poem "Drowning Girl: A Waterlogged Ars Poetica" to savor their sound and substance.

There's no dessert in the picnic basket/so I swallow time. My mouth full/of hands and numbers. I ask for seconds.

Agodon manages to achieve a playfulness while pulling you under to the poem's depths. Throughout the book, she mixes melancholy with cheekiness, longing with mock (and, sometimes, real) rebellion.

The book opens with an epigraph by Anais Nin: Reality doesn't impress me. I only believe in intoxication, in ecstasy and when ordinary life shackles me, I escape, one way or another. There are in these poems, many references to escape. There is mention of exits and entrances, doorways and windows and where they might lead: museums, an unlocked cage, a church, or in "Death of a Housewife, Oil on Linen" an entirely new existence: ...what she wanted/was to tango with another or a key/to unlock the front door and waltz/herself into another life.

Agodon also considers how our veneration for our heroes can both inspire and shrink us. In "Frida Kahlo Tattoo," she writes: I wear a temporary tattoo/of Frida Kahlo believing/I can change the world/and if not the world/then a lightbulb, the channel...

Many of the poems are inspired by paintings, and the reader can almost imagine the poems themselves framed and hanging in a museum. The book has four parts, each dealing with an aspect of work in an exhibition, rendering in words the quirky, keen depths of the poet's vision. In her prologue poem, Agodon invites the reader to ...look up and see the madness/organized in the stars.

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### **Anatoly Molotkov says**

"Be the headlights of the taxi,/ the sidewalk, the dark stairs/ leading to a bright apartment.// See the glow in the window and want to be that glow./ See one person reaching for another.// Be the silhouette behind the shade." Kelli Russell Agodon's witty and moving collection deconstructs poetic utterance to observe humanity through a set of compassionate and innovative lenses. Very refreshing.

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### **Susan says**

Kelli Russell Agodon's voice is uniquely hers. Once you read her, you'll know her poetry when you see it. Hourglass Museum is wonderful. She says, "The hour glass museum remains unfinished," and indeed it does. She's not done grabbing us with her truth and magic, not by a long-shot. You won't be sorry with this book. There's so much mediocre work out there in the world that it was a joy to read such smart and beautiful language. This is a well-crafted book that comes from the heart. A keeper!

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### **Patricia Murphy says**

I was so honored to publish Kelli in two Issues of *Superstition Review* . I find her to be a true literary ambassador--she does great work on her blog, with her magazine Crab Creek Review, and with Two Sylvias Press. Plus she's got such a friendly and positive spirit. I spoke with her about this book at #AWP14 so I was really looking forward to digging into it, and today is my lucky day!

I really appreciate this book for the way it deconstructs the modern family, and how it examines art and poetry in a society overrun with advertising.

Some of my favorite moments:

“whiskey is the valley  
you want to visit”

“When we ride the rollercoaster while in love  
we become the breeze.”

“My younger self was so much more mermaid.”

“Even if it hurts, watch the sunrise.”

“At night madness is the bedspread  
I pull around me.”

“How can we kiss if we have paper  
over our faces.”

“In the closet, my skeleton  
reconnects itself.”

“All those clouds inside you  
ripping you apart.”

“Everyone wants to read the poem  
we’re afraid to write.”

“If you think Jesus  
is a distraction from real life.”

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### **Jt O'Neill says**

Oh my. I just read this book. I had the quiet ease of a Sunday morning to just drop into it and I was carried away by it. Kelli Russell Agodon has a way with words. Her imagery is remarkable and touches those places that I didn't even know existed. In this collection, she ties art and poetry together and the result is wisdom and tenderness. Honestly? Honestly, I want to read more from Kelli as she ages. Her wisdom and words now are impressive and what truths can she add after another decade or two of life? Can't wait.

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### **Mark Stratton says**

At once simple and yet complex, which says a lot and means less, this collection left me breathless at times and at others scurrying for my pen and paper to riff on ideas shared. Completely fascinating, gripping and well worth the time. I'd say more, but I'm not wanting to blather like a sycophant. Needless to say, I enjoyed this book.

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## Cathleen says

Another lovely collection from Kelli Russell Agodon, with references to various artists and works of art.

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## Craig says

I won a copy of this poetry collection from Goodreads, and enjoyed it very much. The theme of most of the poems is the importance of the arts and their preservation, and the book is divided into four sections: Portraits, Sketchbook of Nudes, Ink and Watercolor, and Current Exhibition: Her Invented Museum. There's an opening piece in which I was introduced to the condition known as Stendhal Syndrome, which the notes at the end of the book explain is also known as hyperkulturemia or Florence Syndrome, which is the acute overwhelming reaction to exposure to too much art in too confined a space or in too short a period of time. I've had that feeling! I believe that my favorite section was Portraits, in which there are very clever lines like:

"I try to give them my time.

I try to give them my right,  
so they don't have what's left."

from Line Forms Here, and:

"There's no dessert in the picnic basket,  
so I swallow time. My mouth is full  
of hands and numbers. I ask for seconds."

from Drowning Girl: A Waterlogged Ars Poetica.

The second section contains work that is much less traditionally structured, and seems more personal and harder to grasp. For example:

"wasp in a wineglass  
lost chalice and planet sickness  
pocketwatch left on a grave"

is a very evocative and thought-provoking grouping of words, but I'm not sure I got what I was intended to from it. However, there's a line in the third section that pointed to that feeling:

"Sometimes I slip on the wet chattermarks  
during a long walk where I'm lost  
in my head and I find myself  
pleasurably disoriented.

This happens in poetry too."

The last two sections brought home the art/museum theme most strongly, and it was especially interesting to note that many of these poems were written as a response to work that was inspired by an event or a thing, rather than by the primary thing itself. There are many notes at the end of the book explaining some of the references and inspirations, as well as links to four additional poems that I found worth the time of visiting.

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