



VIEWFINDER

SPRING 2020

IMPROVING
THE BLANK
PAGE: POETRY
DAY AT THE
HILLIARD





Poetry can be a means of deep reflection and expression in the experience and interpretation of art. Students had the opportunity to experience just this with Jack Bedell, Louisiana Poet Laureate (2017-2019) and partnering instructors, at a workshop titled "Improving the Blank Page." Held in partnership with LPSS GEAR UP, the National Writing Project of Acadiana (NWP-A), the Hilliard Art Museum, and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the program engaged over seventy high school juniors and seniors from Acadiana, Carencro, Lafayette, and Northside high schools.

"The Hilliard Art Museum is a strong partner to both LPSS GEAR UP and the National Writing Project of Acadiana," said GEAR UP Coach Megan Breaux. "It provides wonderful resources and professional development for our teachers and students, and it serves as the perfect venue for events with the purpose of bringing students closer to art and what the University of Louisiana has to offer."

Dr. H. Michelle Kreamer, NWP-A Director of Youth Programming & Research Initiatives explained the importance of "pedagogy that supports teachers as writing instructors, as well as alignment with the goals of GEAR UP - providing enriching experiences for high school students that prepare them for postsecondary learning experiences. By being on a college campus and having the opportunity to exercise their creativity and writing skills, the students were immersed in the college setting and produced some wonderfully powerful poetry." (See an example of student work on page 21)

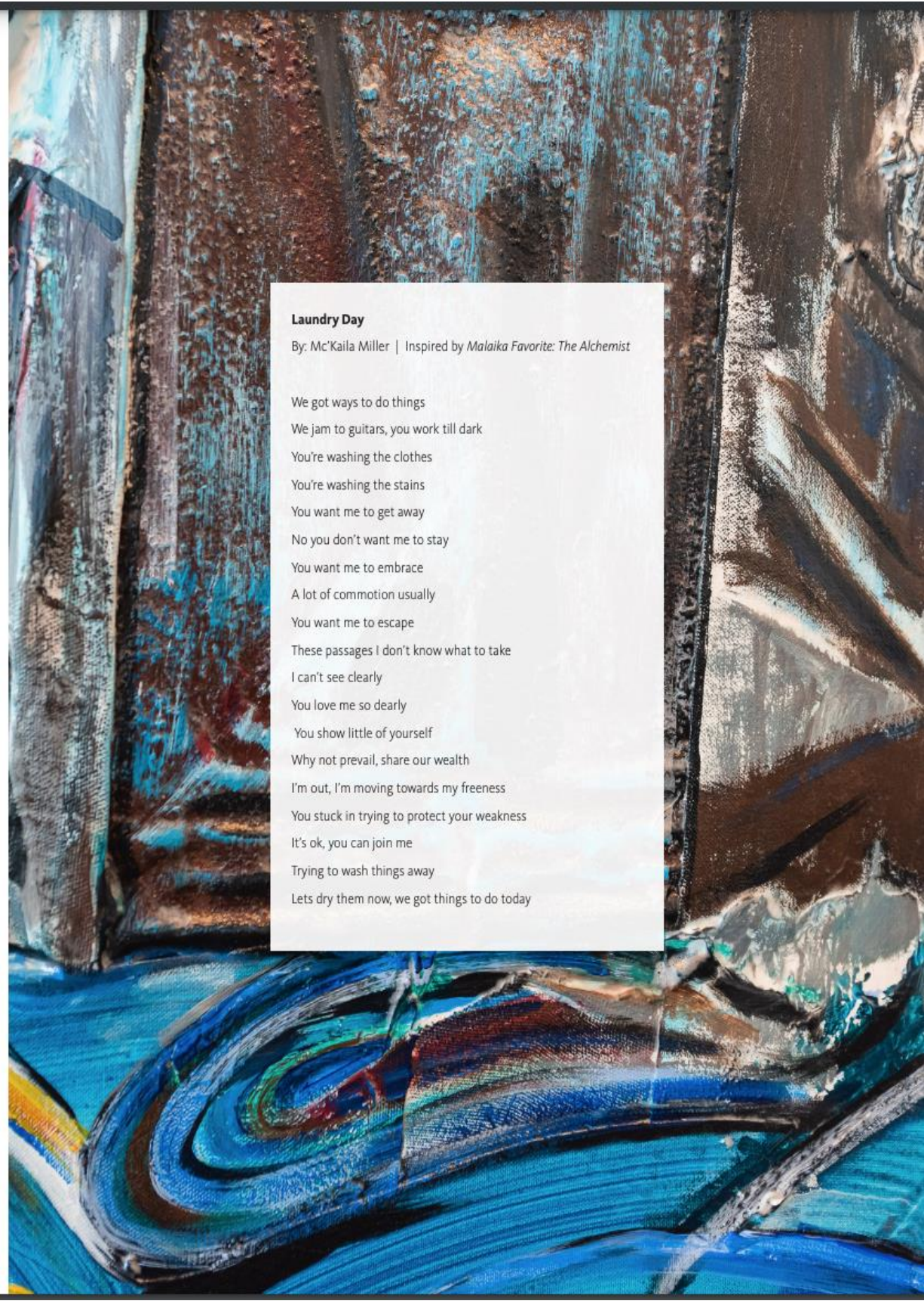
Dr. Bedell introduced the students to ekphrasis, from the ancient Greek word for "description" and now commonly used to refer to writing about art. Since before Homer, Bedell said poets have used words to engage other art forms. "You're all writers," he said. "The things that you recognize and notice are important." He drew attention to the tools common to both visual art and writing. Both

practices, he said, have the ability to freeze time, to be able to speak through subjects, the manipulation of contrast between light and dark, the capacity to reveal character, and the comprehensive rendering of detail, on a spectrum running from abstract to extremely realistic. He encouraged the students to take an inventory as they walked around the galleries, to focus on details in the art that jumped out at them, noticing everything the art was doing to get their attention. "Trust yourself," he said. "Your eye will lead you."

After lunch at UL's Student Union Cafeteria, Dr. Bedell worked with Acadiana High School's student editing team, who are compiling an anthology of student creative work with support from an Aca Arts Grant for Teachers. "Not only does this event increase students' confidence and self-efficacy as writers and poets, it also encourages them to engage in learning and revision processes like expert instruction, peer review, and self-directed editing," said Lafayette High teacher Catherine Godbold. "It also enhances college readiness by familiarizing students with college faculty and environments."

Many of the students were drawn to the Vitus Shell exhibit, where the artist had included a link to a playlist of songs to accompany his portraits. Teacher Consultants Andrea Brewer, Alexander Fitzgerald, Elizabeth Sonnier, and Laura Trautman prompted students to write their own playlist, linking song name and musician to events from their own lives.

Carencro High teacher Alexander Fitzgerald said, "The Hilliard Art Museum is not only a place to gather writing inspiration but a place that opens up a new world of culture to students. I wish Carencro High School juniors could have taken a field trip here just to see the Vitus Shell exhibit. My heart honestly broke a bit that so many African-American students that statistically grew up in the lower economic class system and that are exposed to violence would not

An abstract painting with a complex, layered texture. The background is a mix of dark brown, black, and grey tones, with vertical streaks of vibrant blue and teal. In the foreground, there are thick, swirling brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, and white, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is one of raw, expressive energy.

Laundry Day

By: Mc'Kaila Miller | Inspired by *Malaika Favorite: The Alchemist*

We got ways to do things
We jam to guitars, you work till dark
You're washing the clothes
You're washing the stains
You want me to get away
No you don't want me to stay
You want me to embrace
A lot of commotion usually
You want me to escape
These passages I don't know what to take
I can't see clearly
You love me so dearly
You show little of yourself
Why not prevail, share our wealth
I'm out, I'm moving towards my freeness
You stuck in trying to protect your weakness
It's ok, you can join me
Trying to wash things away
Lets dry them now, we got things to do today