

SHERIÉ FRANSEN

The Summer Went, 2014
Oil on canvas, 77 x 83 in



COURTESY DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

LISA HARTZ

Now Comes Mary Cassatt Down Auguste Renoir's Garden Path, 1919

Renoir, folded into his wheelchair, placed inside his little glass house.

There beyond the lavender, he watches her, his brush clutched in one bound, rheumatic hand.

Cassatt wears a capacious, tea-colored straw hat, eyes blind as mirrors.

Armand, shadow servant, guides her sylph-slender sleeve.

Noonlight blazes her blue dress, intemperate turquoise of an Algerian sky. Her hat floats like a peregrine, like the swift brown end of summer.

In Algiers, years ago, Renoir watched the Barbary light transform the rags of a distant beggar into the robes of a prince.

But this is August, 1919. Degas is dead. Renoir's Aline is dead.

Things fall away, Renoir thinks. *The discovery of light turned our heads*.

Cassatt's narrow step wakes the sand-colored stones. The rock roses reach for her hem.

Renoir looks again to the easel.

Our most wise pictures are made of what we do not know, he thinks. *We obscure, the better to illuminate*.

She arrives at his door.

We only begin to understand.

Lisa Hartz is director of Seven Cities Writers Project, a nonprofit organization that brings cost-free creative writing workshops to underserved communities. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Poet Lore*, *Subtropics*, and *PoemMemoirStory*. She lives in the Tidewater Region of Virginia with her husband and four sons.