

KELLE GROOM

The Table of Perfect

James Lee Byars, 1989

Mannequins who've lost
their heads are near the table
of perfect, gold on white
marble alone in a room
with its shadow, a guard
who tells my friend not
to touch anything.

On a picnic table
a shirtless man
sleeps on one bench.
He's taken off his shoes.
A cereal box steps
out of a plastic bag.

His back is so young,
shining, I want to rub
it as I would a child's
to help him sleep,
I want to hold my hand
to his forehead
like an old woman
in a fairy tale.

When I circle
the park, he becomes
old, grayed and dusty,
a real fairy tale where men
age in minutes untouched,
the spell unbroken,
but I don't know how

to come forward
like the child looking
through a plastic mirror,
laughing, who ran out
of the playground to see me
as if she'd been waiting all day.

Kelle Groom is the author of four poetry collections, most recently *Spill* (Anhinga Press, 2017). Her poems have appeared in *AGNI*, the *American Poetry Review*, *The Best American Poetry*, the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, *Ploughshares*, and *Poetry*. Groom's memoir, *I Wore the Ocean in the Shape of a Girl* (Free Press, 2011), is a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Selection and *New York Times Book Review* Editors' Choice. She is on the low-residency MFA faculty at Sierra Nevada University at Lake Tahoe and is the education director at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

SUSAN MOORE

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Mixed media, 19 x 19 in



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