

PAULANN PETERSEN

Wearing the Sky

How can I count on
a clock's nonsense, its preening
split-second flicks,
when tonight's first star
will take at least
a million times my grasp of time
to find me with its light?

Whenever I stand under
a night sky freighted
with those stars still alive or not,
my body's surface is lit
with billions of their gleam points—
one for each burning cell
within me.

Inside and out, I am pied—
riddled with countless
dying fires.

Paulann Petersen was Oregon poet laureate from 2010 to 2014 and has published seven full-length poetry collections, most recently *One Small Sun* (2019) from Salmon Press of Ireland. Her poems have appeared in a number of journals and anthologies, including *Poetry*, the *New Republic*, and *Prairie Schooner*. The Latvian composer Ēriks Ešenvalds chose one of her poems as the lyric for a new choral composition that's now part of the repertoire of the Trinity College Choir.

PETER PAONE

Bat, 2015
Acrylic on panel, 50 x 40 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST