

J E F F C R A N D A L L

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Exploded Sonnets

EXPLODED SONNETS by Jeff Crandall

Glass, steel, original text. Two curtains: 6'H x 7'W x .25" D each. 2006. \$7,500 for both.

I was offered the opportunity to present a show of my work at MoNA in conjunction with the Skagit Valley Poetry Festival. As opposed to a gallery exhibit, this museum show offered me the exhilarating freedom from the lodestone of salability: my concepts were not burdened by limitations on size, content, appropriateness, etc.

In considering the entrance/exit to the exhibit, above all else I wanted the public to experience a *physical* passage through a poem. When we read a poem on the page we enter a new space mentally and emotionally; the poem draws us in to an exciting, surprising, often unfamiliar territory filled with new discoveries that touch us in some way, whether positively or negatively. As we leave the poem, reading the last line, we return to the mundane world, the page, the book, the chair we are sitting in, that journey now a memory, having changed us — or not; having affected us — or not.

I had planned on writing poem specifically for this piece: an *Ars Poetica* in which the poet reveals his reasons for writing poetry. But on further reflection this notion smacked too much of ego; I wanted something more universal and enjoyable. I chose my poem “Dolphin Sonnets” because:

- 1) The sonnet form is an exact grid of syllables — fourteen lines with ten syllables per line each. This grid, however, is never exactly revealed on the page, but I saw that I could clearly bring it forth in a physical form, allowing me to begin my theme for this exhibit of the transparency of language in a powerful way.
- 2) The poem is comprised of two complete sonnets allowing me to create a passage between the two poems without disrupting them.
- 3) The first sonnet is an invitation to a love affair, which works perfectly for an entrance poem; and the second sonnet is an ending of the affair and a return the regular world; perfect for an exit poem.
- 4) Both sonnets are acrostic, meaning that if you read the first capital letter of each line (in the work itself, the first letter of each of the top glass ovals) they spell out a phrase resonate with the poem. This is the first of several “secrets” I have hidden in this exhibit. I align myself with those who search for the hidden door in the garden wall, those who sit through all the credits at the movie to see if there is that one last cinemagraphic touch at the very end. I like to reward people who look for such things, and what a fine reward it is!

In using the term “exploded” I do not mean “blown into bits by dynamite” but rather I am offering an “exploded view” as in an engineering diagram wherein all the parts of a machine are shown at one time, revealing its structure.

In contrast to a poem on the page, the viewer reads “Exploded Sonnets” in strings of syllables from ceiling to floor, rather than across from left to right. In creating the work, I wanted each line of poetry to remain a line — connected physically and of one piece, rather than the viewer having to jump from line to line in disconcerting and disconnected manner.

The work is made of plate glass and steel cable. I love being able to take mundane items and turn them into works of beauty, the way a piece of gravel can be polished and carved into an exquisite piece of

jewelry. The aqua color of the glass is watery, adding to the poems' sea themes and the ovals, like perfect bubbles or strings of kelp, each hold their syllable rising to the ceiling. Both sonnets form simple curves, soft and inviting like the inner and outer curves of a wave. It is important to note that they are oriented so that as you enter the room, the first collage you see is titled "WITHOUT". This is both an irony and an indication — in terms of spatial representation the room is "within" and the viewer is "without" until he or she enters the space, approaching "WITHOUT" to come within. Also "WITHOUT" implies an ironic absence, a museum space without art would be empty, so it cannot be "without" art it must be "with" art, and indeed the first piece it is filled "with" is titled "WITHOUT".

Dolphin Sonnets by Jeff Crandall

1.

Captured by your laughter, your gleaming eyes
Of jet, I discovered *joy* is ultra-
Marine. High silver and wet, your sultry
Encouragement could only mean to try —

So here I am — buoyant. I want to go
Where the dolphins go. *Show me your heaven.*
If love is a sea then let me dive in.
Magic is stirring with these fierce winds. Now

Willetts and pipers and gulls can descry
(In the shivering distance — *there!* — *she blows!*)
The drag nets and breakers we both have known.
Heartful then, let us begin — your skin by

My skin, who knows how such a journey may
End? But oh, what fun we'll have on the way!

2.

Romance? Love? Perhaps. But time does evince
Every nuance of a relationship.
Take us, for example. One little slip
Up and suddenly — *wham!* — the frog turned prince

Returns to frog, still waiting to be kissed.
Now all our enchantments have been broken.
The old, banishing words have been spoken.
Our fortunes turned and love's poised arrow — missed.

Too bad. But the world is filled with magic.
Happiness is swimming in those seas — oh,
Each of us will find our own ways to know
Solace is deeply green and pelagic.

Endings don't always turn out as we wish.
And you and I must search for other fish.