GEORGE ELLA LYON
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Why Artists Matter</td>
<td>p1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Notions That Don’t Help</td>
<td>p2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Artists Thrive in Conversation</td>
<td>p3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It’s the Jobs</td>
<td>p5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Envisioning</td>
<td>p6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Art Is</td>
<td>p7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Artists Thrive</td>
<td>p8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>What Kind of Power Are We Talking About?</td>
<td>p9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>To Be Clear</td>
<td>p11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Three Voices from ATII</td>
<td>p12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Food for Thought</td>
<td>p13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Question for Pegasus</td>
<td>p14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biography   p15
Why Artists Matter
--found in Lewis Hyde’s The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World

The work of art
is a copula: a bond . . .
a link by which the several
are knit into one.
Men and women who dedicate
their lives to the realization
of their gifts tend the office
of that communion
by which we are joined
to one another . . .
Notions That Don’t Help

If you’re living right, you’ll never have enough money.
If you’re an artist, you’ll never have enough money.
Therefore, if you’re an artist, you’re living right.

* 

A precarious life is ennobling, inspiring, perhaps necessary
to create a true artist.

* 

Artists don’t need much.

* 

What’s health care when you’ve got art?

* 

Artists have it easy.
They just play around till something comes alive.
Artists Thrive in Conversation
--heard at the Berea Summit

I start the dance party
make something out of nothing
am shameless
not afraid to sing.
*

Don’t wait or hesitate.
Get right in and change it!
*

About the rubric:
what if you’re not
giving up
but are derailed
silenced?
*

We don’t all have the same choices:
it matters where you’re from
what your resources are
your age       race
your gender     and health
education       upbringing
physical ability.
*

The artist isn’t the only one who has to do the work.
*

If I can just cover my bills,
buy a ticket to see my granddaughter in Florida . . .
*

(...)

p3
As an artist, I am central to society culture and myself. I walk in the room and I am the power.

*

Start with art that has heart.
It’s the Jobs

the jobs that eat up my writing life.
Getting ready for them, getting to them,
doing them coming home from them getting
over them. And if I don’t have jobs, it’s not having any jobs,
no jobs, that eat up my writing. It’s money worries.
It’s you-can’t-live-an-income-free-life. It’s I wrote
a thousand words and what did I get? Another
day older and deeper in debt. You bet.
So you see either way you go
it’s chomp chomp chomp
on the pages that might
be written, the songs
that might be sung,
but hey! I’m writing
this, so how bad
can it be? Don’t ask.
Envisioning

wood & lathe
dream & ladder
thread & loom
ink
   paper
   paintbox
   sable brushes

steel strings
   breath stretching  the intercostals
   broadening      the back body

beads  seeding rainbow

a breastplate of porcupine quills

outgrown clothes, cut & pieced
   then quilted
      ten stitches to an inch

the sauce brought to its velvet flavor

parquetry
   the e worn off the keyboard

the eye behind the lens
   the heart behind the eye

the dancer       lifting off
Art Is

a dance

alone together
within without
earth sky

many ways

we breathe
Artists Thrive

when forests flourish
in meadow wealth
artists thrive

Artists thrive

where health is nurtured
where dreams are gardens

Artists thrive

Artists thrive

when seen as workers
when someone wants
what we can make

when wealth is not
the gauge of worth

Artists thrive.
What Kind of Power Are We Talking About?  
(question raised at ATS II)

The joy of making  
of living each day  
on the side of life

with community  
to see us through  
when our bridges are swept away

in a tide of self-doubt  
when the way to the well  
has grown thick with thorns

when the rent is due  
and the job is next week  
and the check won’t come

till the board meets  
which is once a month  
though its members eat every day

We’re talking about the power  
to do our work  
and have our supper

the power of the brush  
plump with paint  
of the singer

muscling her breath,  
her songs  
the power of the listeners

to be opened  
and changed. We’re  
talking about what a dancer

does with gravity  
what a sculptor reveals  
about space. We mean

(...)

p9
images dilating
the dark with visions.
We’re talking trans-
formation
something quickening
speech from nothing
a hand out of silence
that reaches
not for a weapon but for another
hand.
To Be Clear

They don’t want a side hustle.
They don’t want to moonlight anymore.
They want to pay for everything with their art.
Three Voices from ATII
--a found poem

I am a fire artist.

Who’s going to tell me what I can and cannot do?

My instrument is the hula hoop.

Don’t wait to be asked to the table.

I set it on fire

Make your own table.

and then I dance with it.
Food for Thought

Just when the cold room, the abstract talk
was about to congeal my spirit and somnify my mind
caterers brought in boxes of warm hand pies—
caramel apple, chocolate, mixed berry—
just like my granny never made
and we all came alive!
Question for Pegasus

Do you get it that we have to eat? That we can’t eat poems? Do you care about the buckling deck rail, the gap between garage roof and wall? Do you see them when you fly over and I’m not here to beckon you down? Do you understand poems won’t fix this?

Listen to me, you mythic piece of flying horseflesh! I gave you my heart long ago. I still give.

But then I was free from fear and had energy like a fountain. Now I’m as fragile as the world. My spine, like my house, is shifting. I can’t work as long in harness.

You turn your great head away, tossing your mane. The cares of this world are not yours paved pastures of debt and death.

But come on, Pegasus, do it for me. Quit your cloudy stall and win us a race!
GEORGE ELLA LYON, Kentucky Poet Laureate (2015-2016), has published in many genres, including picture books, poetry, novels, short stories, and a memoir. Her poem “Where I’m From” has gone around the world as a writing model. Her most recent collections include She Let Herself Go (LSU, 2012) and Many-Storied House (Univ. Press of Ky, 2013). She makes her living as a freelance writer and teacher based in Lexington. For more information, visit www.georgeellalyon.com.