

CASA Magazine: Carol DeCano

Finding A Way Through Poetry

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

WHETHER THROUGH POETRY OR PHOTOGRAPHY, artist Carol DeCano connects to people just trying to find their own way.

"Language is the connection for us," she said. "Without language we're imprisoned by our experience; with language we have the possibility of transcending it."

A collection of DeCano's poetry and photography is on display at *CASA Magazine* in honor of National Poetry Month for the month of April.

Growing up in San Francisco, DeCano loved to read and write. Once, while trying to read by candlelight during Chanukah, she set her room on fire. DeCano started writing poetry at the age of nine when she

brought home a multi-stanza poem she wrote in school that included the line "finding love in the bushes of sin."

To get her out of her head and out of the house, her mother encouraged her to ride her bike. DeCano often found herself at Legion of Honor museum looking at the art. "I think that must be why my photographs are so 'painterly,'" she said. "My

photographs are like painted landscapes." DeCano's first camera was a Brownie, and she's been taking pictures ever since. "I never knew what I was doing," she said. "I was just exploring the world on my own."

While several of her poems and photographs seem to go together naturally, it isn't until DeCano is setting up a show that she finds the right poem to go with the right image. "It very abstract," she said. "I have to find the feeling of what is in the photograph to go with what is talked about in the poem." Some of her poems are site specific, however, like *El Capitan* in the poem *Shelter*, which is about DeCano's son going to Iraq. "I believe nature can be restorative," she said. "Solitude helps us disengage from the stimulus of everything and just think."

After graduating from San Francisco State University, DeCano moved to the east coast where she worked in research at Harvard and Yale before moving to Santa Barbara 30 years ago. She's active in the Santa Barbara art scene and has had several shows of her poetry and photography. She is the 2005 recipient of The Arts Fund Individual Artist Award in Poetry and has been publishing for over 30 years. She organizes The Santa Barbara Poetry Series and is the founder of The Annual Santa Barbara Summer Poetry Workshop, now in its ninth year.

"I think everyone is born capable of writing poetry," she said. "It's a natural response that we have to be talked out of."



Waiting by Carol DeCano



Carol DeCano

Waiting

I've been waiting for you
I didn't know it
But everything else did

The forgotten photographs
In the book
From 40 years ago

The lack of everything
Offered
Crazed blood running
Through staggering heart

I've been waiting for you
Through the leaves
Of printed pages
Through the numbers
That changed
As they stayed the same
The lines coming
Between them

I have been waiting for you
But I did not know it
Every morning
Arrived on time
Infiltrated the coffee
Leaving prints on the edges
All the continual
wanderings
We were all waiting for you

Until the day
I saw the walking
Bringing you closer
Close
Right up to here
To the breathless
In front of
This restless
Harbor
Waiting