

otata 19 (July 2017)



**otata 19 (July 2017)**

<https://otatablog.wordpress.com/>

Copyright © 2017 by the contributors.

Cover image: Pompeii, House of Menander.

*johnmartone@gmail.com*

# CONTENTS

[Tokonoma — from Karen Wilkin on Morandi 4]

tigz de palma	5
Tom Montag	6
Donna Fleischer	9
Mark Young	10
Sheila Murphy	15
Giselle Maya	17
Christina Sng	20
Tom Sacramona	21
Elisa Bernardinis	23
Peter Newton	26
Alegria Imperial	29
Sonam Chhoki	30
Kyle Hemmings	35
John Levy	36
Nicholas Klacsanzky	42
Adrian Bouter	43
Angiola Inglese	44
Elisa Allo	46
Margherita Petriccione	47
Eufemia Griffo	48
Antonio Mangiameli	49
David Read	50
Stephen Toft	51
vincent tripi	52
Angela Giordano	53
Jennifer Hambrick	55
Jack Galmitz	57
Clayton Beach	58
Elmedin Kadric	59
Pravat Kumar Padhy	61
LeRoy Gorman	62
Lucia Cardillo	64

## TOKONOMA

Morandi's themes and, to a large extent, his style were essentially established by the time he was thirty. For the rest of his life as an artist, he remained committed to exploring a deliberately limited territory, in a nearly obsessive investigation of perception that produced images at once remarkable for their repetitiveness and for their subtle variation. But for all the conscious narrowing of his field of inquiry, for all the rigorousness of his self-imposed restrictions, he had no single way of making a picture. It often seems as though he were testing the limits of representation, now vigorously modeling and separating forms from one another and from their setting, now translating forms and setting aside into broad, uninflected passages of paint. It even appears that each new picture, each new set of visual phenomena, no matter how familiar, elicits from him a different touch, a different way of orchestrating color. In fact, the more closely we look at Morandi's art, the more images we examine, the more individual each picture seems.

— Karen Wilkin, *Giorgio Morandi* (1997)

*tigz de palma*

lizard in the sun  
in the lizard

bishop's lace sown between the chaff

flush  
new sparrows ascending  
ancient olive

lamb shear frolic in the wheat sun

garden rose  
wild in the sky  
i think of you

# *Tom Montag*

Held like  
water

cupped in  
the hands,

this light.

Not so much an  
omen as ordinary

sky with crows.

Sky and water press a line of grey horizon.

The crisp air  
here, where  
the world ends,

where the birch  
knocks wood  
in wind,

where the pine  
sings.

Blue hills  
and eagle.

The sky waits  
and I wait

and the whole  
world is blessed.

If I were  
a hermit-

poet in  
the mountains,

how would this  
be different?

Another day  
chasing loss.

Who brings  
this darkness

who can wait  
for morning?

God's name is silence.  
Why do you ask?



*Donna Fleischer*

*on removing the headstone*

two deaths and  
a bop on the head

friend, dear and new

i may be old but  
we be new

*questions, questions*

Sting on the  
way in is  
fine, but how

do I feel about  
Tina Turner grunt  
& groaningly

pacing my  
exit from the  
shopping mall?

*The*

allocation of  
energy

is easy

when there is

no energy  
left to

allocate.

*fortuitous onslaught*

Aleister Crowley &  
his deviant ways ex-

emplified the greatness  
of the Roman Empire.

***I. II. XIII.***

Intrigue, or the

application of  
sympathetic magic  
to unsympathetic

sights & sites.

***Arabica / is grown / in high altitudes***

An exotic tau neutrino—  
two men, one woman,  
& a very happy ending—

has your name all over it,  
just like the Barenaked  
Ladies' classic song.

## *So little*

happened  
there, he  
gave the  
frogs

names  
& lived  
vicariously  
through them.

## *The Tao of mixed herbs*

You can fill  
out an online  
questionnaire  
HERE & find  
out what your  
personal formula  
of mixed herbs is...

& you can order  
it for just \$15, all pre-  
mixed up for you, too!  
Plus, your video guide to  
DIY Feng Shui is also here!

*plaything politics*

“Let me  
just slip  
into some-

thing more  
cynical,”  
he said.

*Noted during Part 1 of No Direction Home*

Looking fey, gay,  
Bob Dylan singing

Mr Tambourine  
Man, not like a

Rolling Stone but  
like an ingénue.

# *Sheila Murphy*

half tones early day  
play by ear light through branches  
earth still revolving

a handsome woman  
fragile beneath silk muumuu  
assertiveness training

divot of the smooth  
warm earth carved out of depth  
sologamy for now

tap shoes, the gun under  
achievement, nicknamed stuff  
as if and only if

cozy flannel night  
a flicker from the warmth  
of threadbare sky



***FINDING THE MAGIC***

wind and rain cat and i wonder where the birds go to keep dry

walking slowly each morning reveals a new bird a new plant

torn by high wind on water the moon calms whole again

shimmer of bumble bee wings iridescent milky way

step cautiously watch for the green tips of wildflowers

stippled with green the earth after spring rain

painting moonbeams on the pond basho's smile

willow catkins on water how can one not wish

potato planting feeling at peace right here on earth

## *serval cat*

spring dawn  
the greening of the land  
makes me rise

raptors counted  
my grandson's voice  
from far away

through high grasses  
we reach the spring  
a chance touching of hands

my heart  
goes out to the Chartreux  
stray cat

summer sky  
a nest of leaves clings  
to the high poplar

*Christina Sng*

hovering  
over a watchful koi  
dragonfly

August rain  
beneath the umbrella tree  
a dragonfly and I

*Tom Sacramona*

daybreak  
migrating flocks  
where the stars were

not knowing  
how to eat a pear  
the light surrounds it

bud  
rendered in  
pencil

the sculptress  
never touching  
her own hands

high ceiling  
the artist  
and his clay

# *Elisa Bernardinis*

colouring  
the April rain  
her pink coat

*pioggia d'aprile  
colorata dalla sua  
mantella rosa*

my nude arms  
covered again  
spring rain

*di nuovo copro  
le braccia nude – pioggia  
di primavera*

shining wind  
I sit in the old garden  
with new eyes

*vento brillante –  
siedo nel vecchio giardino  
con occhi nuovi*

summer memories –  
wisteria petals  
falling into the sea

*ricordi estivi –  
i petali del glicine  
cadono in mare*

in my sky  
clouds without destination  
iris in bloom

*nel mio cielo  
nuvole senza meta –  
iris in fiore*

freeway  
the red of a rose  
rushing through me

*strada veloce –  
il rosso di una rosa  
mi attraversa*

I let my hair down  
darkness falls  
on the oleanders

*sciolgo i capelli –  
scende l'oscurità  
sugli oleandri*



lifting his crutch  
an old man greets me  
summer wind

*con la stampella  
un vecchio mi saluta –  
vento d'estate*

hush  
a scarecrow fixed distant mountains

*silenzio  
lo spaventapasseri fissa i monti lontani*

(Ed.: Vi raccomando di seguire il blog di [elisabernardinis.com](http://elisabernardinis.com))

*Peter Newton*

early summer  
the skiff anchored  
to itself

intermittent wipers  
the whimsical god  
of raindrops

the river bends  
a sand bar's invitation  
to ground myself

migrating herd an amoeba slides across the landscape

taking command  
of the wind  
a boy with chimes

awake to the oriole's splash of orange

the beach  
where I learned to swim  
chewed to nothing

Ouija board  
in the attic  
alone with the dead

scent markers  
south by the lilac  
their path to the hive

a soft spot  
the old orchard's  
return to order

# *Alegria Imperial*

## *micro-stories*

torn off pages in garbage sacks propped up in stoops human tweets

found among sparrows bleeding lips

in her shoe a mother her rose hips pried for truth

the empty stroller I want to understand pollen wind

soaked to the ribs pulled out of a grocery bag a corset

savaged, says the gardener burying fallen leaves

## *Sonam Chhoki*

More deadly than hemlock  
Patterned silence  
in the larch grove.  
A face  
flickers out of the shadow.  
The eyes,  
empty of colour and light,  
The mouth,  
pulsing red-black with rage  
to burn words  
  
to tracelessness.

### *The Third Eye*

A blind widower slowly turning his prayer wheel,  
A motherless child with a russet halo of matted hair,  
A woman writhing in the throes of another karmic birth,  
A corpse swathed in the sacred cloth  
In all these  
The Third Eye sees  
The Clear Light

## *Beware of Knowing*

He is waiting in a yak-hide boat on the moon-glazed glacier lake.  
'How can we ride the ice?' I ask.  
'Your insatiable need to make sense, to map the world and glean meaning  
from everything!' He cries.  
I hesitate at the frozen rim.  
He loops a silver rope around Orion's belt and sails out of the night

harp of wind  
blue pine branches rise  
like butterfly wings

## *Sorcery in Spring*

Weary of carrying this longing around I approach the house. Your favourite  
jasmine climbs over the dark and locked doorway. The only sound in the  
unpeopled street is a dog howling in the fog.

winter returns  
wantonly in late May  
bonfire of red roses in snow

## *When is it enough?*

ack home from hospital. As if ordered by someone, the hawk cuckoo's incessant cry, 'who's in the cowshed?' plays in my head. Out the window where once lime green rice seedlings glowed in the sun, bulldozers plough the terraces for the Expressway.

family shrine  
cobwebs on the Lotus-born Guru  
scorched by butter lamps

singing bowl  
echoing in the temple ruins  
a coppersmith barbet's call

susurrus of rain  
in the bamboo thicket  
a cobra sheds its skin



border control  
yellow-eyed babblers gather

both sides of the checkpoint

spring offering  
crow fledglings drown out  
the dawn chant

equinox dawn  
breaking the silence  
a barbet's fevered call

why do  
the yellow-eyed babblers  
nest in the bamboo thicket

where the cobra visits

Venice nightfall  
ripples of silence  
after the last vaporetto

# *Kyle Hemmings*

she collects milk bottles  
and stray cats  
offers them to the invisible son

*3 by Alberto of Diego*

Alberto Giacometti and his brother  
Diego lived in Paris. Diego  
posed for Alberto. There are three  
sculptures by Alberto  
of Diego at The Nasher Sculpture Garden in  
Dallas. In each Diego  
appears like a grenade of  
self exploding inside the  
impenetrable yet flexing  
metal sack of almost face.

*Three Last Lines by Laurie Duggan  
Plus Three First Lines by Edwin Denby*

I hang by my toes upside down in the trees.  
inflating this camouflaged blimp, my poem.  
across a map of blue skies and faithless love.

A child singing to itself in the sunlight  
Small paintings seen, I cross the Park  
Grey blue ridge, grey green leafage

at minus miles  
per hour Giorgio  
Morandi

## *If I Made the Tree*

If I made the tree into a person  
first I'd decide if I wanted a companion  
then the gender  
and where I'd place it, and the depth

of its roots, the width of the reach

If I made the tree into a person  
I wouldn't want to limit  
its responses to  
seasons  
so it must be deciduous, which when

one traces the word's  
roots, leads back to  
cadere, Latin, to fall

into my arms  
into my mind  
my dreams and out  
away from any my that  
restrains

If I made the tree into a person  
I'd betray how shallow I really am  
though that  
wouldn't stop me

## *Champ*

I was about 27 and  
working in the small  
Seattle movie theater, alone

behind the counter. That  
was 38 years ago and  
a boy (14?) came out during

the movie, looked  
through the glass at  
what he could buy and

seemed to  
luxuriate  
in the choice. He

had something remarkable about him, not  
over-confidence exactly and  
not swagger, but

something that made me, for  
the one and only time, address  
a stranger as “Champ.” I forget

what else I said. What I do  
recall is, in reply to whatever I’d  
said (probably something like “What

would you like, Champ?”) he  
casually, and as if for the nth time, answered, “It’s  
funny, everyone

calls me Champ.” He and I  
both seemed  
to understand why.

## *Talking with a Spider*

Pablo Neruda wanted to. At least that's what he wrote in a poem, that he wanted to have a talk with a spider. As for me? I don't want one. But if I were forced to talk with a spider I'd prefer to do an interview rather than have an informal back-and-forth. Perhaps it would be something like this:

Q: Where did you learn everything you know?

A: From my mother. My father died before I was born.

Q: How do you come up with your ideas for webs? Do you wait for inspiration? Or do you simply begin and see what happens? Or maybe you make a plan before you begin?

A: You can't wait for inspiration, it comes while you are working. Henri Matisse said the same thing.

Q: Have you ever spun a web and had the feeling that you would never be able to match that web? That all your future webs would be inferior?

A: No. I have to believe that whatever I'm spinning now is the best. Otherwise I'd be depressed because it would seem I'm going downhill.

Q: Are individual lines or strands more important to you than the entire web?

A: No. It all must work together, all the individual lines, the intersections, angles, spaces, shapes, the density of my silken strands, all the elements must be right by themselves and also must create something complete that never existed before I traveled out into the air to create it.

Q: Would you ever work with another spider on a web? In other words, how do you feel about collaboration?

A: I couldn't work with another spider. The creative act involves a delicate inner balancing. There are a hundred little decisions and balancing acts involved in every inch of web. Plus, I feel different from day to day and my webs don't satisfy me unless they are in harmony with my body. For example, if even one of my legs is stiff then I create a totally different web than, say, if one of my eyes is swollen shut.



Q: If you were a human what occupation, or occupations, do you think would appeal to you?

A: Sometimes I think of myself as a gravedigger in the air. Other times I like to imagine myself as a fighter pilot.

Q: Are there any of your webs that you regret creating?

A: No. Listen, what I do regret is talking to you rather than working on my latest web. You may ask one more question.

Q: How do you react to the criticism that you are a control freak?

A: Freak? Sure, I love control. But freak? What creature doesn't seek control? Even an amoeba doesn't want to be told what to do.

# *Nicholas Klacsanzky*

the saint thinks  
he renounced everything  
mountain wind

snow powder the graves we can't smell

fluorescent light  
on dirt carried in—  
subway car

on the darkest of nights eel fishing

begging  
next to the mannequin  
a disabled man

# *Adrian Bouter*

flower island  
the cemetery gate's  
broken lock

Forum Romanum  
historical facts fly  
beneath my soles

purple wine  
older than any memory  
this town...

sea of light  
all alleyways lead  
to the square

# *Angiola Inglese*

When will  
the cherries mature?  
the first rose

tufts of clouds  
in lukewarm air  
tufts of poplars

tenderness —  
fish eyes  
on market stall

clouds at sunset —  
pitted cherries  
one by one

last look  
at the meadow —  
three poppies

inside a painting  
a white dress dances  
with the poppies

May thunders  
a hula-hoop forgotten  
in the garden

page after page  
sitting in the shade  
of a larch

# *Margherita Petriccione*

broken breath —  
on the pathway edge  
cut valerian

late night —  
a scent of roses  
in the bitter drink

June day —  
young skin  
in the rain

# *Eufemia Griffo*

sea storming  
the mistral whispers  
its secrets

childhood memories  
shelling the grains of wheat  
one by one

<https://eueufemia.wordpress.com/>



# *Antonio Mangiameli*

wind -  
the prayers lost  
in the fields

potting plants  
her pregnancy  
brushes a daisy

old mower ...  
I pull the chord  
in my shoulder

*Stephen Toft*

dappled sunlight  
the pauses within  
a sparrow's song

heatwave  
i go deeper into  
the cathedral

after swimming the river now flowing though me

*vincent tripi*

where did I come from?  
where am I going?  
zen gardens

impermanence  
the wind in every one  
of my mountain views

# *Angela Giordano*

early evening  
a bunch of stars  
in the vineyard

*E' presto sera  
Un grappolo di stelle  
dentro il vigneto*

big murals  
on gray walls  
suburbia

*Grandi murali  
sul grigiore dei muri  
Periferia*

supermarket  
always a migrant's hand  
outstretched

*Supermercato  
La mano sempre tesa  
di un migrante*

Rainy day  
The rainbow shut  
In a puddle

*Giorno di pioggia  
L'arcobaleno chiuso  
in una pozza*

# *Jennifer Hambrick*

alone  
the riverbed  
groaning

city street the rock that said abide

flame lily  
too close  
too easy

spring lightning  
the scar on the tree  
the moment he leaves



*I hear my wife singing*

*What a Wonderful World.*

She's not there: it's a recording  
on her cell phone.

Her voice is off and she scratches  
at the high notes.

I'm waiting for the construction workers  
to look at the collapsing tower  
of bricks on the roof.

We need to know how much  
it will cost to fix and if they can do it.

I pace along the parapet looking  
down at the wires strung along  
the parking lot. A used car  
dealer had an internet provider  
string it up without our permission.

I'm waiting for the field workers  
to come and remove it.

I hear her voice again smooth for a moment  
and I think to myself what else can I do

Looking at the trees  
covering the mountain  
I know I am wealthy

*Mosaic Virus*

Moments before I'm due to close shop a young man with long blonde hair & a reddish beard saunters in with a hand rolled cigarette dangling unlit from his mouth— Boho chic. He asks me for spare change & I decline. His cigarette bobs with every slurred syllable; he asks if I have a Xanax or any other pills to give him. When I tell him no, he replies “hey man, you know, sometimes that really works,” shrugs his shoulders, then exits.

*garbage & tents strewn along the railway line city of roses*

My son is eating every blackberry he picks. My daughter eats one and drops one in the colander. I eat the ones so ripe they fall apart and put the rest away, spitting out bits of the dried flowers as I cut the highest hanging clusters free with a knife. Last summer we gathered figs, plums, apples and pears from the abandoned orchard on the other side of the fence. This winter the trees were all cut down and fed into chippers. A large white sign on a post proclaims the intended construction of a grand new complex of condominiums. When we arrive home I find a single letter in the mailbox, it is a no-cause eviction from the landlord. She's wants to sell the house.

*foreign entanglement a storm of starlings*

It's summer and I can't hear a single thing but the wind in the trees. In the fall when the mushrooms rise again from the loam the entire forest will drip with a susurrus of rain, crows will echo through the mist, the Douglas squirrels will ululate from towering old growth— the entire forest will sing with life. But right now, it's just the wind, passing through me and the hemlocks as if we didn't exist.

*a voiceless voice the trees and I*

*elmedin kadric*

sooner or later  
a dot coming  
for the water

lying around doing a dot nothing

a dot into a room full of people

sunlight  
a dot  
in mind

an olive  
with both hands

# *Pravat Kumar Padhy*

paper boat  
the old man unfolds  
his memories

# *LeRoy Gorman*

the odds  
of life on other planets  
cherry petals

morningloriesky

my birthday  
how easily they blow out  
the Perseids

enough cloud  
the moon slips into something  
more comfortable

a redcoat in sepia  
my poor Irish forbear  
from Mars

retirement  
the grey car is silver  
for a day

# *Lucia Cardillo*

sweet in the wind  
scent of lemon flowers —  
white butterflies

*Dolce nel vento*  
*profumo di zagara*  
*Bianche farfalle*



noon sun —  
my narrow shade  
under my feet

*Sole a picco*  
*La mia ombra ristretta*  
*sotto le scarpe*

green bud —  
the silent pleasure  
of waiting

*Verde germoglio*  
*Piacere silenzioso*  
*dell'attesa*