

SPRING 2010 ORLANDO POETRY PRIZE WINNER



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"The Impermanence of Human Sculptures"

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The essential "arrangements"—
choose a coffin to keep her

protected from "the elements." Given sufficient time
we rust like iron, disintegrate in the presence of air

moisture and water. The palpable aging of paper.

Do we all sleep like marble
statues, fixed points in a room
with locked expressions? Interpreting the abstract

space dangling between
waking and sleeping is
an obsessive repetition. Was it Eva Hesse

who explored the medium of art
fading over
time and wasn't that part of what made it

beautiful? That's what I still called my mother
post-mastectomy. Her single breast drooping,
a perfect display of three-dimensional

impermanence. A brave faced statue.

That's how I like to think of it. No—
that thinking makes it bearable

when people ask: how
did it happen? She hanged herself, a lone

wire suspending her, delicately,
like wet paper molded into the exact shape

of emptiness. Unstable. Like a cloth-covered coffin,
left crumpling in the wind,

like paper. Or Eva. Dear Eva,
diagnosed with a brain tumor. Eva who died
in 1970. And mother who wrote a letter before

she died: keep it, safe—

as if the storage of places and names, as if
things and people, couldn't
rust indistinguishably.
