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Artists

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the duckweed way.
Let us grow and wane
with this ideal, the way

it keeps the single petal
of its bloom confidential
in a hollow on its side.

Lemna minor

*with thanks to Lucien Stryk,
who translated*

ARTISTS

1

Hip calls

“Take out your false teeth, Mama,
Let Daddy suck your gums”

a word—

“It was already a word
and I just wrote the rest of the song.”

Fish skeletons in his van’s wastebasket
might be going
to be a word. They are almost teeth,
they have been sucked clean.

7

I know what a word *was*.
Now it is always

something for him to finish.

Magic Sam told Hip Linkchain
he needed more than other people's songs.

“So I wrote ten.
I just record my own now.”

“How did those words
come to you?”

“Out of a clear blue sky.”

I'd heard him play
in the dark of a lounge.
Indirect lighting?
Direct unlightedness.

“Out of a clear blue sky.”

2

William Dawson, sitting in sawdust,
eighty-seven, nearly hidden
by a large Aretha Franklin
that he built,

said he “just carved”
although he'd never carved before.
He awakened
where form is.
He awoke
in the void.

He paints
how he could raise buildings now,
each roof with a balloon
in which it speaks for itself.

Buddhi, noesis, shih, satori,
deadline, grasp, imperative, prajna.

A purple bird,
red-speckled yellow crow.

What you feel,
how you see things.

“Bird on a Porch,”
on a human house smaller than a bird house.

The commanding bird is sudden knowing.
Mr. Dawson stands under it

in his tiny door.
He was born

recollecting it.

3

Because she changes
every myth she coins,
Yvonne Wells is saying to her studio guests,
“God sits on His thorn,”
and she has positioned His purple halo
above Christ’s crown of
bleeding rickrack.

A thorn is a pinnacle.
And as she races to tell
her fast-manifesting narratives,
so little seems
invented before her moment.

Her hot iron falls on the rug
and even that accident
of melted yarns
she quilts

and scripts, naming it “Branded.”

A third creation is an odalisque
and shows her procreation’s core.

This concocting started
one day when her story-told children had grown; she saw

anyone could be possessed
but isn’t,
afraid maybe

to welcome every message,
to quilt a cross one day and a come-on the next
according to signals

from an unsquirming
hardassed
god.