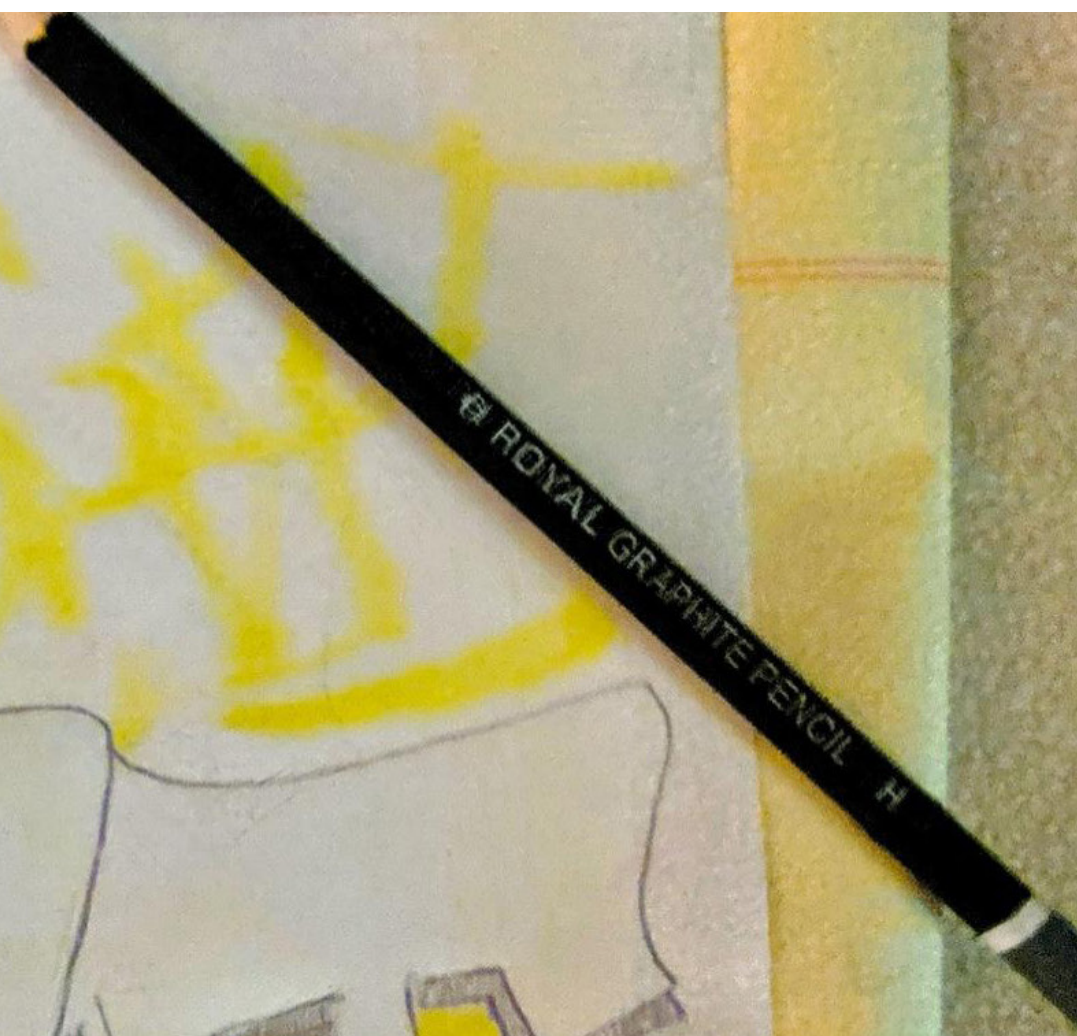
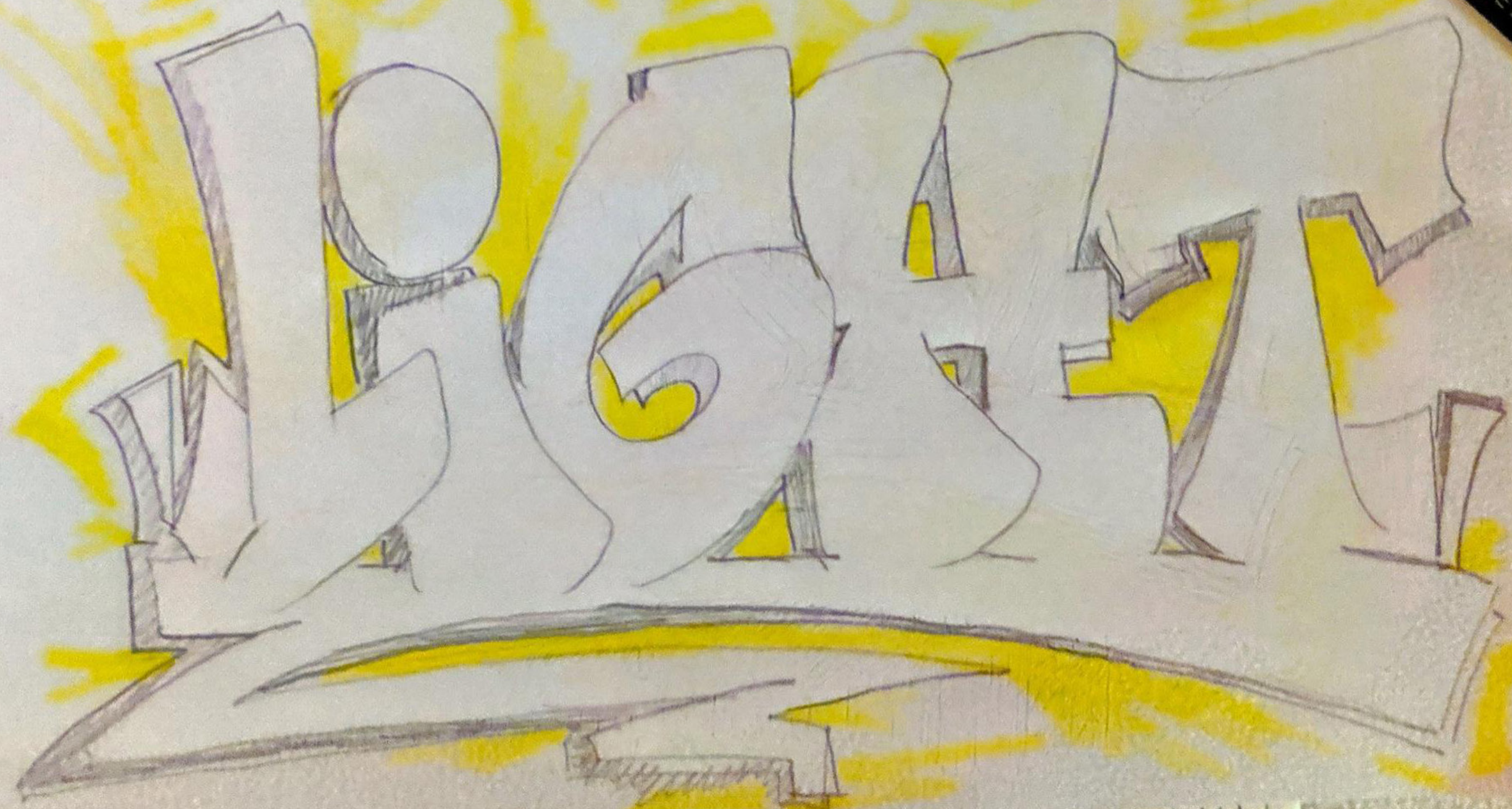


Handwritten Chinese characters in yellow ink, appearing as a background or watermark. The characters are highly stylized and somewhat illegible, possibly reading "以燕筑巢" (Building a nest with swallows).



word (the remix)

by Charles Monroe-Kane

Love. Grief. God. Birth. Death. Religions have been founded, wars waged, and epic myths created in response to such words. Words like these can evoke great passion; they are bigger than linear, logical, or grammatical explanations. Sometimes certain words call for further, deeper exploration—to be torn apart and put back together again. Like the Siren Song they entice us, though threatening, to obsession.

If I gave you the word "light" what would you do?

I gave five area poets that word. Each poet wrote a poem inspired by LIGHT. I recorded them reading their poems and remixed them together. I took that audio and layered ambient sound and music under during a live performance. In addition, a graffiti artist painted a mural inspired by LIGHT behind me during the performance. A sketch is on the cover of this booklet.

Here are their complete poems before the remix.

# L I G H T

There have only been  
two kinds of light in my life

The first light  
Is the one I can see with my own eyes

And the second light  
Is the inner light  
That can go unnoticed  
If you are not looking real carefully

Back in the 1960's  
After growing up on the city streets  
Of Racine, we played "Ditch" which  
Is a Wisconsin version of "hide and go seek"

There was always a street light on  
Or a back porch light  
Or light from a living room window  
It seemed dark enough  
But each time I was caught  
I secretly wished it could have been  
Darker  
Pitch black where someone could be right next to  
you  
And still not see you

In the 1980's  
I built my first home in Racine County  
Eagle Lake Manor to be exact  
And the two lane highway

Had just enough streetlights along the way  
To ensure you would get lost  
At some point.

Any English street using the name  
Of Manor or Court or Boulevard  
Was being pretentious  
And let you know you needed to be leery  
Of what the name actually meant

One Tuesday night  
After driving home on Highway C  
From Milwaukee  
I noticed an eerie glow in the air  
As I drove closer to my home .

It wasn't a flash light in your face light  
It was subtle and subdued  
But strangely very noticeable

I had recent seen the movie ET  
And worried that this might be a good time  
To be visited by aliens  
Flying in UFO vehicles

Something was definitely off  
I was not quite sure what  
But wanted to make sure I wasn't seeing things  
Or going crazy

The next day, the co-worker

Who is usually talking non-stop paused  
said "Did you see the full moon last night?"  
the moonlight was glowing and amazing"  
Before I had a chance to get embarrassed  
I realized I had lived in a city most of my life  
Never went camping, or the few times I did  
I was enthralled by the campfire and forgot to look up  
Or we picked the weekend during the middle of the month  
And there was no full moon.

Suddenly all the stories I had read  
About the light of the moon  
Now made sense  
Because I couldn't quite figure out  
Why they had been writing about  
Something I didn't quite understand

The second kid of light in my life  
Has been the inner light  
A glow, a spirit  
a sense of hope in the midst of darkness  
a light that someone carries inside themselves

My mother Micaela Mireles  
Had that kind of light  
I noticed very early in life

She was always smiling  
Always reading my mind  
knew exactly what to say or do  
To change me right in my tracks  
Even when I was mad  
and had temper tantrums

She had figured out  
At a very early age  
that her life  
was going to be a struggle

Worrying too much about it

Or being upset  
Or angry all the time  
Would serve no useful purpose

Even though I had ing 12 brothers and sisters  
She always made me feel  
Like I was truly a very spoiled child  
With a sense of entitlement  
Like I had been an only child  
Which is mathematically impossible  
With twelve children

She was a great conversationalist  
Even though she only had a third grade education  
And spoke little English  
Because she had become such a great listener

She was able to transfer that light to me  
During our conversation  
As she was preparing tortillas  
And dinner at the stove

And I remember always  
Being in the kitchen  
Not really helping much

But trying to be the first in line  
For dinner  
And get a chance to nibble  
before everyone else was served  
She carried this light  
And passed it on to her grandchildren  
Several of whom  
were not quite sure where it came from

and when they were struggling through  
their darkest days

they would keep walking towards the light  
that their grandmother  
had placed in their hearts  
before they could speak or understand anything

this inner light has served  
our family well  
and I wish my children would  
have had more time to experience her beauty  
and love

but sometimes just a little light is needed  
to find your way  
home again

# OSCAR MIRELES

Oscar is the Poet Laureate of Madison. He has been the Executive Director of Omega School for the past 22 years. Omega School provides adult basic education services (GED Preparation).

# RENAMING THE DARK

(a poem about Light)

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.

To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,

& find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,

& is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

~ Wendell Berry

Do not cure me, the Darkness said. I am not sick.

Come lay your body by mine & stroke my wet head.

Sing the secret song we made up. Gibberish & bad words:  
the one that made us laugh too loud, our teeth showing—

I'll call you by our shared nickname & make the ugly face  
you make in the mirror, no one looking. And I'll confess:

Yesterday, I tossed your underwear onto the lamppost & park bench.

I sprayed, in glitter-paint on the sidewalk & the tall billboard

at the corner of East Johnson & Sherman

every last one of your passwords.

I hid your car keys inside red candy-boxes under the sofa, then shouted,

*My name is Pockets, & Drawers. Call me Closets & Diary!*

Yelled *Let's play hide & seek You are It Go!*

I knew you'd remember all our secret spots.

I brought your garbage bin in from the curb to the dining room,

pulled out the wet scraps of food & paper & braided them into flowers.

Filled vases with inky water & placed the bouquets by your bed.

When finally, exhausted, you came to lie down there,

You asked, a bit timidly, if you could call me *Candle*.

You said you'd always been scared of the Dark.

You couldn't remember me, really.

Our gibberish, bad words, or secret spots—

*Come to me blind*, I answered. We are part and parcel.

Do you understand this? If you want to see me,

don't make yourself an Eye. Lose your sight.

Make your body a candle. Light the dark wick of your hair

til you are burning, burning,

luminous. Til you are all soot & cinder, then light.

---

About this poem:

This poem is about the gifts of darkness, of the 'dark night of soul.\* It's about what blooms in the dark despite our awareness. It's about what lives in the places we would repress or forget in our shame. The 'sample' comes from Wendell Berry, who tells us to lose our sight and fully enter the dark to know its gifts: 'the dark too blooms and sings.'

Other silent samples in this poem are probably Leonard Cohen's 'there is a crack in everything/ that is how the light gets in' and Simon's 'hello darkness, my old friend,' which is about communing with one's shadow (who in this poem, is in your bed, anyway.)

Like these songs before it, the poem wants to seduce us to submit to the dark and broken we fear, especially our own, to find a special kind of seeing, a powerful kind of 'Light.'

\*(*la Noche Oscura del Alma*-San Juan de La Cruz, 16 C. Spanish mystic)

# DANA MAYA

Dana has been published in *Feminist Formations*, *Volta*, the anthology *Listen to Your Mother*, and more. She is active in public writing projects such as the *Spontaneous Writing Booth*.

# DEAR GRAVITY

This morning I heard the *bird in burden*—the song of it—and remembered something about light—the speed of it, yes, and the separating of it from darkness.

But I thought too of how lucky fireflies are to be of little economic importance. I thought about human beings—a clever way water devised

to move itself around the planet—to defy you, dear gravity. Water using star dust as vehicles. We are watery stars that you hold close,

so close we believed we were wholly yours but this morning a little bird reminded me that we are really creatures of light,

light which is a millionbillionbillionbillionbillion times stronger than you, dear gravity. Even when you've pulled us down into our graves,

we will escape your grasp and become the light inside of flight—

RITA  
MAE  
REESE

Rita's poetry has been widely published, including the books, *The Book of Hulga* and *The Alphabet Conspiracy*. She serves as co-director of literary arts programming at Madison's Arts + Literature Laboratory (ALL).

# SPEAKING LIGHTLY

We all are light in this world we live/  
Different arrangements and colors like Roy. G Biv/  
We all can shine, let us view life in that pretense/  
All of us with our own diverse wavelengths/  
Whether that is radio, gamma, micro or X/  
We come in many different contexts/  
All shining, with different types of interactions/  
Sometimes life bends us like refractions/  
The amount of light shown depends on the actions/  
Or the Kaleidoscopes of our emotions that show our compassion/  
We hope the that our lights will provide common semantics/  
And demonstrate real life quantum mechanics/  
Cause there are two sides to every story/  
But shine places both in one category/  
How do we glow? Better yet how do we illuminate/  
I say love is at the center the how we jubilate/  
So much hate in the world has become so intense/  
And love is the only thing to help get back to our inner radiance/  
The twist and turns of life can make one shimmer/  
Time is guaranteed to no one so these are the times to glimmer/  
A simple flash, as we go along our way/  
Might be the bright spot in someones day/  
And if we work to help one another it gives all of us a gleam/  
That is the true basis of our American Dream/  
So twinkle twinkle little star/  
Shine your light so the world can know who you are.

ROB  
"DZ"

FRANKLIN

Rob Dz is a hip hop artist and poet who has worked with the likes of Nas, Common, Talib Kweli, and Blackalicious to name only a few. His work for the Madison Public Library won him the prestigious National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the award was presented by First Lady Michelle Obama.

# AT THE WALL

Արև ջան, լույսով ներկեմ պատը քեզ համար  
Արև ջան, իմ շոգով սիրելի մաշկը ներկեմ  
Կասեմ ուր ես գնացել

Կասեմ տեսնել, քո նուռը քո Pomegranate քո ءوض քո light

Կասեմ دَعْنِي walk the way of aerosol & empty walls

دَعْنِي parse the darkness from motion my body gives to the spray can

دَعْنِي live in the flick with a fingertip

after escaping the traffic in the laughter of Vartan

Արև ջան let me paint let me

Լույսով էս պահը ներկեմ

լույսի հատակությունը բերում եմ պարելով ու պտտվելով ու թափթփելով  
ներկի գույներում

լույսը ձերքի շարժումում է

սրտի օջախում է աչքերի կենտրոնանալում է

طئاح الیلع تاقوالا غازجأو غارمحو غارضخ غَقْوَوْتُ  
رظانلا نويغُ یلع  
غامال بوبنأ لالخنم اهذُعصن يتال تافوقسؤل الیلع  
يسمش يببيبح اي **Արև ջան**

Let us tall in the blaze

Let us sing into bricks & cinderblocks

Let us mix compressions in the can

دَعْنِي spin our imaginations then rhyme it on the wall

دَعْنِي release through paint scent & blunts

دَعْنِي transform in the public body into curve and kinetic

دَعْنِي lean into the gathering at the wall

Dear Sun, let me paint the wall with light for you

Dear Sun, let me paint my lover’s skin with my heat

I will say, where did you go?

I will say, to look your pomegranate, your pomegranate, your light, your light

I will say Let me walk the way of aerosol & empty walls

Let me parse the darkness from motion my body gives to the spray can

Let me live in the flick with a fingertip

after escaping the traffic in the laughter of Vartan

Dear Sun, let me paint let me

Paint this moment with light

I bring the light’s clarity by dancing and gyrating and slipping

in the paint’s colors

The light is in the hand’s movement

in the heart’s hearth in the eyes’ focus

Green and red and the parts of time sign the wall

The eyes of the spectator

The roofs we climb to by water pipes

O, Lover, my sun, dear Sun

Let us tall in the blaze

Let us sing into bricks & cinderblocks

Let us mix compressions in the can

Let us spin our imaginations then rhyme it on the wall

Let us release through paint scent & blunts

Let us transform the public body into curve & kinetic

Let us lean into the gathering at the wall

# ALEX VARTAN GUBBINS

Alex Vartan Gubbins’ poems have appeared in the *North American Review*, *WLA Journal*, and *And Here: 100 Years of Upper Peninsula Writing, 1917-2017*. His Arabic poetry translations are published in *Metamorphoses*, *Diode*, and *Asymptote Journal*. He’s lived in Armenia and the Arab world.

**Graffiti Artist – James Gubbins.** James is the owner of Momentum Art Tech in Madison, a graffiti art-centered supply store. He also connects area graffiti artists with businesses to create murals. His clients include Promega and Food Fight among others.

**Sound Designer – Charles Monroe-Kane.** Charles is a Peabody award-winning interviewer and senior producer for the national public radio show *To the Best of Our Knowledge* and author of the memoir, *Lithium Jesus*.



Our culture has evolved into one that seemingly no longer cares about words – what they mean, if they are true or false, or if they are beautiful or not. Words have become things that are bought and sold, shoved down our throats, and diminished to mere letters. Fuck that! We rise up, the poets and the artists, to remind our sisters and brothers that words still mean something!

Join us. Share YOUR light. [instagram.com/lightpoetrymadison/](https://www.instagram.com/lightpoetrymadison/)

So, I beseech thee: let there be light!