

in the curves deserves a standing ovation. It is a masterful collection by a maestro at the top of his game. I predict that we will be applauding Bridges over and over again in the future.

Before I Forget Them, by Jamie Wimberly (Alpharetta, Ga.: Redheaded Publishing, 2020). 53 pages; 5½" × 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-578-66619-8. Price: \$10.00 from the author at jwimberly@defgllc.com; or available for free download at www.redheadedpress.com/free-e-books

Reviewed by Ron C. Moss

James Wimberly's new collection of haiku and art is a feast for the eyes. The cover of an emotionally powerful heavy red, almost a darkness of red, over windblown grasses evokes a feeling of much promise to come. What follows—sixty-eight haiku interspersed with four pieces of art linked by an almost red bloodline through each—does not disappoint. Edited by John Stevenson, we can feel his light but very learned and experienced touch on what could be said to be a selection of words that are pictures and pictures that are words in the very best way.

In the chapbook's foreword, Stevenson quite rightly makes mention of Buson, the famous poet and artist and his masterful works, placing Wimberly within the venerable tradition of painter-poet. We also know that haiku master Bashō painted. In a famous story from the "Grass-Hut Farewell" and "Words at Parting from Kyoriku," Bashō asked his painting teacher Kyoriku, "Why do you love painting?" "Because I love haikai," he answered. "Why do you love haikai?" "Because I love painting." Although he studied these two arts, they came down to the same thing.

Wimberly's title, *Before I Forget Them*, not only prompts an intriguing expectation of a poet's words, but we eagerly await their unfolding in and around a complement of visual expressions. From the first, a single haiku,

winter eve
she is reminded to use
her inside voice

quickly sets a mood fully realised by the accomplished art on the opposite page. The link between the two is the feeling of “inside,” which the painting beautifully demonstrates with great skill and craft, with layers of pastel coloured paint that give us a feeling of being subdued and closed in.

The following pages open with haiku sometimes three to a page, but they don't feel crowded as the opposite pages are left blank, allowing space to record mental notes of the gems that are revealed.

each sparrow
each sorrow
a flock of forms

This wonderful haiku is filled with a rhythmic beat that is also visual with the repetitive end rhymes in “sparrow” and “sorrow.” And the last line tantalises us to look even further.

sable paint brush
back in the box
my father's casket

Wimberley is not shy in going to those deep emotional places we all travel in our lives. We ask ourselves what is the significance and connection of the sable brush and the feelings for a departed one. He's at his best when in deep introspection, and we are taken on a journey of the soul...

pencil down
he continues to draw
within himself

The visual art opens us to more of the poet's brushwork. Carefully selected found things and digital captures blend together with painted elements seamlessly, without feeling forced or over-burdened. And the same could be said about his haiku. There's so much to explore in the images that draw you into multiple layers. More haiku tumble out through the pages with fresh images and peoples and places that demand our attention...

moving day
his baseball mitt
found unused

So much left unsaid, but a haiku like this lifts us to a place where we can bring our own thoughts and feelings to make connection. How much of our own lives feel unused, the broken promises we made sometimes leaving us filled with regret.

fingers
through luminescence
the aching sea

This haiku and the masterful image on the opposite page is a swirling mass of linking and shifting, as a truly well created haiga (haiku painting) should be. A painting of a person appears to have been placed in a real-life box and then photographed. Other juxtaposed elements include a drinking glass, which gives sharpness and a different focus, and some text on the right is also interesting and creates more room for exploration and thought. This reviewer needs to contain himself so as not to preclude too much of what can be found by the reader. But this combination, along with the high standard of many of the elements in this book, will speak for themselves and reward tenfold with each successive reading.

her longing—
moon smooth and
polished white

To me this haiku is in the best tradition of master Buson, full of painterly images. Far from being irritated by not knowing the “her” to whom the poet is referring, I felt right away connections to sister moon and the smoothness and polished white is a unique painting in words.

charcoal
thickening on paper
the twilight

With this haiku the poet has brought together all the wonderful elements of a tactile discipline crafting fine art and the poetry of haiku. As I alluded to in the beginning of this review, Bashō’s painting teacher Kyoriku, with his love for haikai and painting, saw no distinction between the two. Wimberley has achieved just this, and as a successful established artist, he has shown that to write poetry with heartfelt emotion and present it in the same pages with well-crafted artworks, brings endless rewards. *Before I Forget Them* is a fine achievement, indeed, and I recommended it wholeheartedly.