

Review by Michael Todd Steffen

Rare Book Alert: close to flat by Irene Koronas



Get interested if you find an 11 x 4 brown card cover booklet in an attractive purple band, with the simple title close to flat on the front. It is a handmade booklet by Irene Koronas, of 11 poems that so gracefully associate their assorted thoughts and images that the reader can not extinguish them with simple readings. The poems are cryptic and curious, like riddles or puzzles. We have announcements of culprits that have set up this plan of fugitive defense in the poet's responses: It's "laura riding" ("we all creep before her"). It's the poet's aging mother

handing out hand outs
handy around the house
handmade patterns
hand sewn outfits
washing by hand...

It's the "june 1, 2008 dream" of a men's room and a blackened bombed out car.

Reminiscent of Gertrude Stein, Koronas exposes the structures of language—

that is this then
this then that
that brings within
that which that is...

—in an intriguing poem called "is this then that" consisting of only 10 different words over 15 lines. The poem echoes a wholly embraced distraction found in the first poem "temptation" in which the poet shirks typical intellectual pursuits, watching "a robin run" — or has Koronas dissolved reading the newspaper and the memorial day parade to this image of the orange-breasted bandit-masked bird? Characteristically feisty, contrary, Koronas likes to surprise us with

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gentler depths,

and when I die
I'll miss the color orange ("grounded")...

her humor,

her ninety three large years
close to within an inch
of being swept up...
gamblers predict her demise ("little book")...

as well as her acceptance,
wind lifts, carries away
small poems
the blossom of each word
breaking down ("haiku 2").

I was lucky enough to catch Irene with a copy to purchase for \$10.00. The book is hand-cut and sewn. If the community at large is lucky Irene will have placed copies of close to flat at some of the local bookshops for the serendipity of curious browsers.