GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
D.C. COMMISSION ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Poem for the City Museum

A SEASON SPEAKS

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Poet Laureate of the District of Columbia

Now we have what is chronological,
what minces its way softly through numbers
to people, places and things.
But a city hungers for more than this:
it needs a nourishing ascent into its own
geography, where vertical whispers aren't
enough, where the food of archives can rest
only in the bellies of stars, where streets
and homes and families themselves do
the mathematics without a calling,
within an adjective of grace.

On this day of civic celebration rising
from itself into the minions of history
that is now a building, jaunty, bold
and clear, and apt to cleanse the solemn
soil on which it stands, a cleaning for
a cleansing, a purity for a praise, we,
the devoted kin of generations of
neighborhoods; we, the hallowed, the
unhurried heirs of this city's legacy;
we, the unsung, lost and found, and
well-remembered; we, the prophets of the
past, fashioned to promised hallelujah's,
pulled into the present, future-dressed,
unsamely in the length of sound and
the width of color, we linger to give
voice and heart to a New Age that
transcends dates and numbers and what
we own in the fragile stems of time.

On this day we offer a blooming ground
Called City, sweet and deliberate,
A constant family, vision of its own
deliverance, into a Season of Celebration and,
speaking in light, in the blood of the moment,
pausing where history dares to go.

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