

BOB HICOK

## An artist's statement

In the diorama of solitude, I'm the lone yak  
forever surrounded by wolves, trying to make it  
to the shimmering river of tin foil  
that conveys a quality of motion,  
like all beautiful things. Simultaneously,  
I'm the god-creator who knows the wolves  
will never get me, I have time to think  
the reaching of stars will accumulate  
into a cup of light some lucky sailor  
gets to carry as a signal to the rest of us  
to sleep well and dream that every  
pair of pants comes with a harmonica  
in the pocket. Those are my day jobs.

When not putting food on the table, I whistle  
the part of a flute in a band on a bus  
late at night, playing to spoiled burger wrappers  
and the moon, to keep the heart company  
in its banging against the pipes.

People who make things  
have more interesting junk drawers  
than people who don't miss  
eating crayons, when long past bedtime,  
the tongue still behaved like little  
green fish in little yellow windows  
in a little orange house the fish could leave  
whenever they wanted, but stayed

# Unto the breach

After five days of hydrocodone for kidney stones,  
five days I didn't bathe, read the Magna Carta,  
or poop, a man reached in and emptied my rectum,  
one of the greatest kindnesses ever shown me,  
so civil, I expected to look up and see him  
in a tux, headed out to hear or even meet  
Philip Glass, creator of "Music in the Shape  
of a Square," which I listen to with stubbornly  
loopy ears, and cried softly through my thank yous  
as he did so, like rain that wants to remain  
on the grass, to fall no further from the sun  
than the tip of every blade, the top of all  
that green reaching toward the future,  
the dream I've been having and asking my body  
to share, the boat of me I keep wrecking, the room  
I never asked to enter and will only leave once,  
what other metaphors fail to capture the truth  
of anything, let alone the fact of home, the shape  
I hold but am not, the matter I've borrowed  
but mutter on about as my own, as if I possess  
any of the roses I've ever given your hand  
to marry for as long as beauty pretends to want us

# The roots of geometry

It was just a lump of fat  
below my wife's nipple. Thank god  
I didn't have to text people  
the news of a scalpel. Not like B.  
for H. "Out of surgery. Doing fine."  
Not like C. for L. S. for S.  
Add an O—SOS: save our sisters.  
I have four of those. My mother  
is the author of eight breasts.  
None of my sisters  
have the philosopher's taste  
for martyrdom, the mechanic's taste  
for oil, the aerialist's taste  
for release from the dress  
of gravity. But they all have bodies  
and have entered the time  
of lessing: anyone I touch  
can touch the person next to them—  
next in age, next in love—  
and be only one further touch away  
from a scar. What a weird  
game of tag. I prefer  
when a stream touches a river  
touches a watershed touches an ocean,  
not the one we came from  
but so much like it, who cares  
to split hairs. Just a glob of fat.  
Still, I'm picturing cutting  
and wincing. Picturing hands  
handing over and over  
pieces of my wife's life  
that have been unlifted.  
Is imagining an amulet  
against happening? Do we repeat  
what we fear until it's as small

and comforting as a baby's rattle  
in our heads? A friend  
feels her flesh not being there,  
ghost breasts she wonders  
if a ghost child suckles.  
I picture the nothead  
bent to the notmilk and still  
turn away, build a tent  
in my own thoughts  
for them both of privacy.  
The first intimacy. How did the circle  
find us? Mother and child.