

Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe

The Object of Beauty

Written in response to **Fergus Feehily**, *Fortune House*

Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe is a poet, pacifist and fabulist. *Auguries of a Minor God*, her first collection, was published by Faber & Faber in 2021. A finalist for the Dylan Thomas Prize, John Pollard Foundation International Poetry Prize, Michael Murphy Memorial Prize and the Butler Literary Award, it was chosen as a Poetry Book Society Recommendation, National Poetry Day Recommendation, Shakespeare & Co. Year of Reading Selection, and a Book of the Year by both The Irish Times and The Irish Independent. In 2023, she was appointed the Rooney Writer Fellow at Trinity College Dublin. Nidhi is an editorial director at Skein Press, contributing editor at The Stinging Fly, and serves on the Expert Advisory Committee to Culture Ireland.

The **Temple Bar Gallery + Studios Writing Commission** aims to expand ideas around writing about art by inviting Irish authors to create a series of pieces inspired by the exhibitions at Temple Bar Gallery + Studios. In 2024, TBG+S has commissioned Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe to make a piece of writing inspired by each of the exhibitions in the gallery programme.

Over the last ten years Temple Bar Gallery + Studios has commissioned ground-breaking Irish writers to write on the gallery programme. Previous writers include Sara Baume (2015), Claire-Louise Bennett (2016), Gavin Corbett (2017), Doireann Ní Ghríofa (2018), Annemarie Ní Churreáin (2019), and Ian Maleney (2020), Nicole Flattery (2021), Thomas Morris (2022), Pdraig Regan (2023).

The texts are available to download from www.templebargallery.com and printed copies are available in the gallery.

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The Object of Beauty

It was night, and winter, and dark, and raining.
The man bent over the pages, searching for words
forming letters, twenty-seven loose sheets of writing,
paintings, drawings and engravings, subtly improvised
variations on the concrete expressions of the typewriter.

He spent much of his life in one room, certainly in
one apartment, a perfect pentagram of five chambers
cradled in a looping, horseshoe-shaped courtyard;
a matchstick-like drop of streets and lanes, sounds
passing, a thousand scuffling feet on cold grey stone.

The ladder was tapping at the window almost
like a ghost; mysterious lacquered sculptures,
a small statue made of ivory, a spinning top,
frankincense on a marble table, a strange spiral
of gods surrounded him in the hidden library.

He was not thinking at all about Selene, her
cloud-like curves, the choreography of her body,
the words and song coming from her pale mouth,
her diffuse softness, all inside broken and sweet:
nothing could have been further from his mind.

In fact, he was thinking of art; and spirituality,
that the world and reality itself were in flux,
what is celestial bearing a startling dissimilarity
to the concept of infinity, a beautiful nowhere
laid down or near as can be, light made into earth.

Outside: a single flowering magnolia tree, horse
chestnuts, white blossoms, an off-white figure,
a bright dot in a painting heavy with pigment,
a wildish character standing alone amid the rain,
gently becoming, a universe always just out of reach.