

EMILY GROSHOLZ

Proportions of the Heart

In classical flower arrangement,
Masako says, three major stems occur.
The *shin* stands thirty degrees from vertical.
The *soë*, forty-five degrees,
is just three-quarters of the *shin* in height.
The *hikaë*, three-quarters of the *soë*,
points outwards, low, at seventy-five degrees;
most often this one is a flower.

What a classicist I have become,
impelled by the broad hand of revelation,
that is, experience.
Masako's creatures fill our country house
like novel theorems from the *Elements*;
out of fixed proportion, beauty rises
unlike any that I used to summon
in rented rooms from floppy big bouquets.

A single sweep of branch, unflowering,
another upward twist,
and there's the shape of nothing caught in air,
somehow the proper counterpart of one
or two explosive flowers.
Don't be afraid, she says, her fingers hidden
inside the vase, to put more details in,
as long as they don't interrupt the lines.

The heart's most elegant, extravagant
designs arise, I see,
from careful choice and rapid computation.
In half an afternoon, Masako fills
our baskets large and small, and the clear vases.
Two leans from one, and three from one and two,
and suddenly altogether they compose
their ratios to self-sufficiency.

Even the purple brambles in the field,
cut by Masako, fall in whole ellipses,
and twigs repeat their angles on the branch.
So may you and I and our small flower
flourish in the constraints
space and number pose on families;
and make our tracery around the center
of certain loss more beautiful, and sure.

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