



# '09 PRISMA

OSU'S ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE / SPRING 2009

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PROVOST'S POETRY WINNER

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I CAN'T HELP YOU

KATHERINE WESTERMANN

His hands are big and rough  
They look like hands that ache  
Tough hands, the hands of a maker  
A maker of furniture  
A maker of high concrete walls

Hands that hold bank statements  
Crumpled, stained, torn on the corner  
Statements that explain his grey hair  
Statements that explain the tremor in his voice  
As he says, "Por favor, por favor señorita"

But he must prove his need  
Beyond the aching hands, and the heavy cough  
His illness is not enough  
To move the letters on the green sheet,  
The fuzzy Xerox that says "Proof of citizenship  
required..."

I volunteered to help people  
But I turn this man away  
This man with the hands of a carpenter  
He cannot see the doctor  
No, not today

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The Provost's Literary Prize, established over twenty years ago, is an open competition in poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction. Any currently enrolled OSU undergraduate is eligible to submit work. Winners receive a \$300 prize and on-campus publication. A committee of creative writing faculty presents finalists to the Provost, who selects each year's winner(s). For more detailed contest guidelines, please contact Prof. Scribner, Chair of the Provost's Literary Prize Committee, at [keith.scribner@oregonstate.edu](mailto:keith.scribner@oregonstate.edu).