

"WORDED: A POEM FOR MASSART"

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What started as Normal, what is now
near the Muddy River, MassArt is the place

that brings us together, supported
as we set out on our making

with our storehouses, our tools
to intimate a way– even a wandering

into what may be forged out of inklings
or sketches. We amass or distill, play

with scale, temperature, style, idea, all
the textures. We make sure the lights are on.

Sometimes we feel torn
when someone asks, "what are you making?"

One foot out of the elevator, we say, "ask me
tomorrow." Sometimes we ask for more support.

One day, I saw a kind of shrub in my yard
growing in someone else's

in a shape that I didn't know it took,
angling upward, narrowly rising (how is it

even the same). The one at my home
branches outward, stretching out.

All I knew was rearranged. Thank you
shrub, soil, sun approaching at just

that direction, and the one tending it,

making us aware of yet another shape.

This taking shape is evergreen. In this
place that binds us, bids us, even

burns us up some days—it urges us
to keep asking elegant questions. To show up.

We thrive on surprise. We get hunches
and test them out. We risk and show.

We may even get on our haunches
for a good look at something, that looking

that takes time. Listening too.

Someone asked, what are you making?
One time, I said, I'm making a bright tongue

then the elevator doors opened and I saw a giant
camel made out of pantyhose.

I didn't know I needed to see one
until I saw it. Over the years I'd look for it

as it traveled down the Tower floors.
What are those things you can't stop looking at?

Returning to? Don't even know why. You press play
again. You go back to that book, that show, that museum.

Some days, I have sat on the sturdiest of assignments,
a chair someone made entirely out of cardboard,

now a gift to the hallway. Each corner, each hallway,
each closet, each room a budding gallery.

And us: all of us, brave MassArtful people gathering
who make this place every day. What are you making?

Gathering? Trying? How are you?

[Note: MassArt's original name was the Massachusetts Normal Art School.]