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PAUL HARTAL: LOVE POEMS

This is an A4 spiral bound book with 53 pages of images and poems. Very nicely produced. There is a full colour image on the front and another on the back. The images inside are black and white. The book was published to accompany Paul Hartal's exhibition of Painting and Poetry at Hanseo University Museum, Seoul, Korea, April 5-12, 2004.

In the introduction, Hartal gives a poignant description of the relationship he had with his wife. Although the theme is love, he does not shy away from the reality of being married and the extreme difficulties it entails. Following the Introduction, there are pages of poetry and images, which complement each other very well. Many of the poems are descriptive in nature (TWO SPHINXES):

**Look! The golden carpets of fallen leaves
Lie on the October grass.
The drooping willow at the corner
Between a pine and two maple trees
Stands like an eroded camouflage**

There are poems about rejection (SHE DOES NOT TALK):

**She does not talk
To me any more
And does not look
At me
Just
Strolls about
All day long
With downcast eyes.**

and there are poems about passionate moments (THE KISS) and all shades of love in between:

**I look into her eyes
And I see in them
The pure white blossoms of Lily
And the sun rising over the mountain,
The bliss and joy of life, the sorrow and the pain.**

Most of the poems are visual and in WOMAN WITH TRAIN, the images are very strong:

**she dreams
of pink-skinned breast-fed babies
of white butterflies
or red grapes and rye bread
with black olives.**

These particular lines build on the colours one by one.

The images are not illustrations and in most cases are as strong or are stronger than the poems. The cover images are especially pleasing, with interesting use of colour. Consequently, I would describe Hartal as an artist who uses words, and therefore his poetry needs to be absorbed in conjunction with his artwork. This book is a fine introduction to Hartal's work.

reviewer: Doreen King.