

# A Creative Zeitgeist

## The Tactile Mind Weekly #42

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*Coffee Shop Notes*

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Some artists dominate life, by infusing their personalities into their artwork, but sometimes an artist is fortunate in being dominated by life. Ayisha Knight is one of these lucky ones. Describing herself as a multicultural person, possessing physical and personal heritages across a variety of ethnicity and philosophy, she has imbued the wide range of her creativity with an exotic Zeitgeist of spicy realism.

Not only does Knight's work demonstrate an eye for beauty in both festive and mundane happenings of daily life—dancers, musicians, along with schoolchildren going down the street, a woman sweeping the steps in a courtyard, people in a café, soccer players cheering, sculptures made from radishes, and various signs on buildings—she also is adept at capturing the warmth and spirit of humanity, even in the black and white photographs of bridges on a river delta, in what looks like a bleak winter. That scene possesses in one gesture the dramatic conflict of opposing forces, muted sunlight interplaying with the dark shadows of water. Her trip to Cuba also seems to have heightened her sensitivity to colors of the urban landscape. Although her visual repertoire is not the sleek polished product we see on the cover of *Vogue* or *National Geographic*, there is something inherently REAL in her work, flaws included.

Likewise, in her poetry, she confronts various truths, those which she has lived with, in a celebratory sort of exorcism. With a sparse use (no overkill) of literary puns, and having described herself in a short autobiography as a Deaf Woman whose primary language is ASL, she unfolds dramatic scenes of an emotional landscape heavily shaped by her life experiences. Her theatrical expertise (as her CV reveals) no doubt contributed to the development of her unique "voice," and in addition to her writing, she has also collaborated with her friends and peers in producing an audio CD of her poetry.

This recent milestone of hers, the CD, is a great achievement, in that it brings to mind what Alison Aubrecht mentioned before (in TTMW #34 "Consider Music"): how much deaf people really do enjoy music, song, and dance. After all, it's time to put to rest the antiquated notion that deaf people "cannot hear." And then there's another notion to bury as well: the idea that deaf people exist solely on the basis of their disability. We've been reminded often that deaf people come from all walks of human life and Ayisha Knight excels in proving this to be consistently true, with both herself and her creative commitment providing the evidence. Check out <http://www.ayishaknight.com/index.htm> and take a look.

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Sara Stallard loves art, books, cats, and urban landscapes. When she's not writing or making homemade books, she can be found prowling around DC's Eastern Market in hunt of the perfect cup of coffee. Her cats, OJ and PJ, keep her sane.

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