

RHONEL ROBERTS

Pinky and Chauncey, 2014
Acrylic on paper, 30 x 24 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

ROXANE BETH JOHNSON

Horse History

My father said he was a horse:
strong, stupid, black.
He used to make a fist
like a colt's muscled knee
when he spoke such verities.

He loved three
wood stallions
in a park he visited alone,
each painted a brocade of color –
haunches flowered red, green, gold –
painted eyes now chipped, dry pits.
When someone chopped them down,
he took a severed ear.

Ancient folklore says soon I'll die
because I dream of horses –
one licks sugar from my hand
in a blue field, another runs through ash,
flooding my eyes with dust and I stumble.

I see my father now, his black, black skin –
how long have his hands been open?

Roxane Beth Johnson is the author of *Black Crow Dress* (Alice James Books, 2013) and *Jubilee* (Anhinga Press, 2006). Her poems have appeared in the *Harvard Review*, the *Georgia Review*, and the *Pushcart Prize XXXI* anthology.