

ADRIENNE MOMI

Saucy Little Hum, 2012
Mixed Media Gilded Monoprint, 30 x 30 in.



courtesy: R. Blitzer Gallery

ROBIN MESSING

Birth or Not-Birth

You have lived all year without men,
without chandeliers, without draperies, without a stunning
kiss. The world carries you anyway, thinking
you will awaken with your grown breasts and sorrow.
You don't recognize the chance to love
your bad foot, a storefront, a tambourine, looking up.
Your skin has no agency, and you believe the cello,
in its sweetness, has no part. You remember fears like

luscious fruits.

You lie and live with emergencies—sour cherries
and rusty steel mills. The girl you were never died.
She lives in roses and rhubarb and ash. Each day, you believe
nothing happens—spring stalled, boats only paper, basil's taste
no longer erotic. You write life's bare song, erase Paris,
frighten yourself. Your mind's harshness is sick with reasons,
hard-wired, unusable.

Instead you must stumble, prepared
to love against your will. You must whisper, "Kill me tomorrow."
You must lose your impatience with blindness. You must long
and not long. You must think without politeness, without
stubborn pretending, without lust for improvement.
Budding is a bird call. Budding is mortality. Budding is
an astonishing
secret. You must understand, like the country you are,
the difference
between birth and not-birth. And when you feel
nothing significant,
persuade the captain of your victories, that you are
the valley singing
of a larger happiness.

Robin Messing's novel *Serpent in the Garden of Dreams* was published in 2008. Her story "Drive-by," published in *Drunken Boat*, was nominated for a 2011 Pushcart Prize. Most recently, she contributed vocals to poet/playwright/composer Cornelius Eady's just-released double CD *Book of Hooks*.