

## ANYA GRONER

# In Class We Discussed Homelessness

Everyone had a friend who had a friend who wasn't homeless but had given a guy some coins and watched him spend it

on beer and then drive away in a black Mercedes. I learned that no one is really homeless. I learned that homelessness

is a fad, a choice. "It's mainstream now," a girl said, licking her iPhone. She'd downloaded the new popsicle app. She told me ladies

wear rags to panhandle and return nightly to houseboats with three-port garages and turrets from which they can summon

their falcons. "If someone were homeless," the smart kid said, "*actually* homeless, they might try *trying*." And I'd thought

I was in charge here. The bell rang. My students filed out. They wore see-through backpacks and off-brand visors. One had a briefcase,

another, a machete. "Do you love me?" I said. Without comment, each handed me a dollar or whatever gum they pulled from their pockets.

Outside, a truck honked. The sky flashed orange. A man emerged with a loaf of bread. A child tripped over nothing, a curb.

My voice was like toast. Was I speaking aloud? I smelled Chinese food and urine. I was by myself. I was not alone.

**Anya Groner's** writing has appeared in numerous journals, including *Ninth Letter*, *The Rumpus*, and *Carolina Quarterly*. She received her MFA from the University of Mississippi, where she was a John and Renee Grisham fellow. She teaches at Xavier University in New Orleans.

## WARREN CHANG

*Returning Home, 2006*

Oil on Canvas, 30 x 24 in



courtesy: the artist