



Blue Begonia Press

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“You can be your own, unknown self”: Elizabeth Austen and *Every Dress a Decision*

SEATTLE — How do we become who we are? That’s the question at the center of Elizabeth Austen’s debut poetry collection, *Every Dress a Decision*, due out in April from Blue Begonia Press. The Seattle-based poet and public radio literary commentator will give readings from *Every Dress a Decision* on Friday, May 6 at 7:30 pm at Open Books, 2414 N. 45th St., Seattle and on Saturday, May 21 at 7 pm at Elliott Bay Book Company, 1521 Tenth Ave., Seattle.

Austen’s poems test the boundaries between the known and the unknowable, as a woman reckons with the sudden death of a brother and her complicated past. At times wryly funny and at others wrenchingly vulnerable, these poems reveal tensions reverberating among desire, family, spirituality and identity.

Poet Jane Hirshfield describes Austen’s work as “powerfully original in both vision and voice.” Austen’s physical voice may be familiar – for the past 10 years she’s produced author interviews and poetry commentary for KUOW 94.9 public radio. She is a dynamic performer of her own and others’ poems, and has been featured at the Skagit River Poetry Festival, Richard Hugo House Literary Series, and Bumbershoot Arts Festival, among others.

“If Elizabeth Austen is ‘between gods for the moment,’” writes poet Nance Van Winckel, “it’s because—gratefully!—she hovers and dances close to the vestigial, the elusive, and the transitory. She sees with a steely eye. She sings with the purest pitch. By turns tender and tough, spare and lush, these poems speak to and for the fleeting, fleeing world. An absolutely stunning and cohesive first book by a first-rate poet! *Every Dress a Decision* is a joy to read, and reread.”

Novelist, poet, and TED Fellow Chris Abani writes that “Elizabeth Austen’s poems have great emotional range, formal rigor and an ambition of scope that is tempered beautifully by a considered intimacy. A poetry both luminous and grounded in the world.”

About the Author:

Elizabeth Austen spent her teens and twenties working in the theatre and writing poems. A six-month solo walkabout in the Andes region of South America led her to focus exclusively on poetry. In addition to *Every Dress a Decision* (Blue Begonia, 2011), she is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *The Girl Who Goes*



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Alone (Floating Bridge Press, 2010) and *Where Currents Meet*, one of four winners of the Toadlily Press chapbook award and part of the quartet *Sightline*. In 2006, she produced *skin prayers*, an audio CD of her poems. Austen's poems have appeared in the anthologies *In the Telling*, *Poets Against the War*, *Pontoon*, *Weathered Pages* and in journals including *Willow Springs*, *the Bellingham Review*, *Verse Daily*, *Swivel* and the *Seattle Review*, among others. She performs regularly at Pacific Northwest venues including the Skagit River Poetry Festival and Richard Hugo House. Elizabeth served as the Washington "roadshow" poet for 2007, giving readings and workshops in rural areas around the state. She is the recipient of grants from Artists Trust, the City of Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, and 4Culture, and has twice been nominated for the Pushcart prize. She makes her living at Seattle Children's Hospital, where she also offers retreats and journaling/poetry workshops for the staff. More at elizabethausten.wordpress.com and bluebegoniapress.com.

About Blue Begonia Press

Established in the 1970s, Blue Begonia Press has published over 60 volumes of poetry with an emphasis on Northwest authors. Poet Jim Bodeen and his wife, book designer Karen Bodeen, ran the press out of their home in Yakima, Washington. In 2011, they handed the press down to poet Dan and his wife, book designer Amy Peters. *Every Dress a Decision* is their first project as the new publishers. Blue Begonia's work has been recognized with awards from the Academy of American Poets, King County Arts Commission, Bumbershoot Book Festival, Artist Trust, and the Washington State Governor's Office.

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