
A clear trajectory has defined the poetry of Lewis Warsh, from his earliest publications until today. A supple, limpid, use of language and rhythm, a seemingly daily phraseology, a sublime mix of the overheard, the found, the attended to, and the personal, long ago secured him a place at the center of a revolution in poetry that continues to expand daily.

Warsh's early work shared a common ear for current language with such poets as Tom Clark, Anne Waldman, and Gerard Malanga, but in his more recent poems, Warsh has refined his statements to a crystalline lucidity of expression that is observably his own, while still partaking of the general discourse of his times.

Warsh works in a flamboyant style bred through deceptively everyday causality, yet he is adept at subverting expectations he himself sets up, leaving the reader to recognize the person behind the poems. That person performs verbal miracles, while slyly but consistently transgressing accepted social norms.

One mode he is fond of is a kind of updated couplet, in which he pumps up a thought or direction in the first line, only to deflate it in the
second, as in his poem "Eye Contact," which begins:

We make eye contact across the crowded room
but I’m too tired to speak
I write her a letter but at the last minute
decide not to mail it

Warsh has worked in many poetic modes, all of his own devising, from prosy, notebook-like, entries, to chiseled, lyrical lines. In a longish poem called "The Songbook" from Alien Abduction, Warsh writes:

I thought that I would
live an orderly life but
instead I made a mess
for which I have to
admit I’m not contrite
so don’t even start

There's an affective melancholy in some of Warsh's new work that is often offset by a touch of wit, a tart reminder that things, while they may seem bad, are probably slightly ridiculous too — and the narrator of the poems, while he may seem to have a lot in common with Warsh, is not actually him, though he is us. Please welcome the narrator of his poems and Lewis Warsh himself to Dia.