

### Third Place:

#### **Stanley Spencer visits the Hepworth, Wakefield Of Angels and Dirt (Summer, 2016)**

**Alison Carter (Cockermouth, England)**

Welcome to the Merrie City, 'Cookham'.  
It is different here, more Old Testament,  
but I think you'll find inspiration.

I hear you plan to take in the i-pad  
Hockney's. I believe his bright  
aesthetic suits modern technology

though I have heard them described as gutless  
by some, candied Van Gogh's with scarcely  
discernible sheen, texture or surface.

Perhaps, you'll reacquaint yourself  
with the hollowed bellied families,  
the gargantuan stringed bronzes.

Your own retrospective, Of Angels  
and Dirt, is housed in a high white space  
that rings to the gasps of the resurrected.

But I doubt you'll get there. There's too much  
going on out here. The gallery's skewed  
angles are stacking up. An edgy ark is rising.

Covered barges beneath the bonded  
warehouse congregate before a clown  
faced clock on a high pole that spins.

Kids eating their high end lunch from stiff  
paper bags, tickle each other's feet,  
improvise a parting of the waves

as they half sit, half lie toe to toe across  
the bridge, their legs pinball flippers  
angled upon each visitor's approach.

And if you look beyond the pool  
there's a lifebuoy jittering on a weir.  
No sign of nylon rope or a visible anchor

but it's a constant. I like to think  
it's for those who believe it is possible  
to walk on water come Friday night.

### **Judge's comments**

**Stanley Spencer Visits the Hepworth, Wakefield** (third) also drew me from the first for its precision of language (though 'hollowed' in the fourth stanza looks like a typo), its strongly visual imagery and most of all for its witty evocation of that fusion of the everyday with the transcendental which is a hallmark of Spencer's paintings. The poem is rhythmically fluent and full of delightful touches - Hockney's i-pad pictures dismissed by some as 'candied Van Goghs with scarcely discernible sheen', an 'edgy ark', children eating their 'high end lunch from stiff paper bags' and the crowning image of the poem 'a lifebuoy jittering on a weir'. 'Jittering' is exactly the right word. From here the poet leaps to a take on Spencer's imaginative landscape 'those who believe it is possible/to walk on water come Friday night' which seems as unforced as it is perceptive.