2023 College Undergraduate Poetry Competition Winners

2023 Edna Meudt Memorial Award

A Gentle & Modern Ape
by Weston Wise

"I couldn't stop returning to the distinct voice and incredible language of A Gentle & Modern Ape. Navigating the mental maps of Americans who don't have space for Kenyans, the speaker moves between laughter and rue in a sharp, dizzying manner, as in the assertion that his passport is 'fake' because "'Kenya" isn't a real country.' A line breaks with wordplay; a dialogue swerves around catachresis: If there is technique, this poet wields it! 'Banana Poem' took my breath away with its sparkling subversion of stereotypes. I am amazed by the enjambment, and something like Frank O'Hara's wit meeting Shailja Patel's lyric in the margins." – Alina Stefanescu, author of Dor and Stories to Read Aloud to Your Fetus
"Grief House immersed me in the world created by the poet's specular attention to detail. From the noise of television blurring the background to the dialogue between broken glass and a dog in the park, everything conspires to speak, and each noun is lit by this potential. 'The catechisms, the crushes, the jealousies' buried in a dead mother's diary, the daughter casting herself as Catherine the Great only to discover 'a girl dressed in ghosthood' . . . the skill with which this poet carves a tangible elegy, and then leaves us with a resonant image: 'in the foreground: only a woman and a knife.'" – Alina Stefanescu, author of Dor and Stories to Read Aloud to Your Fetus