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## Pushcart Prize-Winner Reads CATA Students' Poetry

By **Nichole Dupont**

*iBerkshires Staff*

04:50PM / Tuesday, July 27, 2010

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GREAT BARRINGTON, Mass. — If you're looking for a poetic pick-me-up on a rainy day, Donald Platt is not your man.

Yet despite his somber, broken tercets, the two-time winner of the Pushcart Prize and recipient of a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts is coming to the Berkshires to celebrate (and yes, maybe to weep). This Thursday, [Platt](#) will be the guest reader at the sixth annual Art Show and Poetry Reading hosted by CATA (Community Access to the Arts) at its headquarters on 71 Railroad St. According to CATA Executive Director Sandy Newman, having Platt read is the icing on a very hard-earned cake.



Along with poetry, CATA artists will be showing their artwork based on the theme 'Sticks and Stones,' such as this one above by **Natasha Lorick**.

"He's lovely and charming," she said. "It's an honor to have him come and read the participants' poems and share some of his reflections. Donald will read their poetry. To have him here is sort of a gift."

Platt will be reading 14 poems by CATA participants, including those of his younger brother (and his muse) who was born with severe Down syndrome. Like Platt's brother, CATA participants are all adults living with disabilities. Through CATA, participants become enmeshed in visual and performing arts workshops that encourage dialogue, experimentation and, ultimately, artistic expression. According to faculty artist Pat Hogan, the faculty are given a theme every year and a few thoughts addressing that theme. Then it is theirs (and their students') to do with what they will. This year's theme: "Sticks and Stones."

"We started by discussing color," Hogan said. "We talked about the color of nature, of sticks and stones, then we decided on what were some simple natural materials, going back to nature. We also talked about the not-so-nice poem about sticks and stones and words that harm and words that heal. Some were amusing. Some were very touching."



From September to June, Hogan and her class and other faculty artists and CATA participants have focused their efforts and their art on the theme. The result is an impressive collection of 87 pieces (most of them framed works with some smaller sculpture pieces) from 12 different settings each uniquely addressing "Sticks and

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"Untitled" by Stephen H.

Stones."

"It's really diverse work," Hogan said. "Some of our artists are so prolific. The range of ability is great."

Newman said she is hoping to show off this range of talent to the community as a whole and that perhaps some of the pieces will make their way into the private collections of Berkshire residents.

"They're thrilled to have their work on display here," she said. "They know, and many say, that they are working artists. They get exposure like any other artist and 50 percent of their sales."

In addition to the sales of original works by artists, CATA also sells printed cards (they now have a "Sticks and Stones" collection) felt purses, totes and jewelry, all handmade by participants through the CATA direct craft cooperative. While sales from these items are not the "bread and butter" of the program, Hogan said that it is just another way to honor the artists and their work.

"We're all about their abilities, not their disabilities," she said. "It is pure joy to have the opportunity to teach these talented people."

The CATA sixth annual Art Show and Poetry Reading will be held Thursday at 71 Railroad St. and will begin promptly at 5. For more information visit [communityaccesstothearts.org](http://communityaccesstothearts.org).

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