

STICKS AND STONES

Linda Witte Henke

STICKS AND STONES

Although this series began as a lament over the deterioration in the tone of public discourse in our nation, it grew into a broader exploration of the impact – for good and for ill – of words within every expression of human relationship.

Work on the series has included a search for quotes, from scripture and beyond, that invite reflection on the power words have to shape attitudes and provoke action, on the responsibility we have to steward that power with compassion and care, and on the realization that even our most casual uses of words can and do affect others in profound and enduring ways.

*Sticks and stones may break my bones,
but words can never hurt me.*

While this adage, burned into our psyches from a young age, may be a catchy phrase, it simply does not ring true. In every season and circumstance, how we use words matters deeply.



Let the words of my mouth,
and the meditation of my heart,
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord,
my strength and my redeemer.

[Psalm 19:14]



There are six things
that the Lord hates,
seven that are
an abomination to him:
haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
a heart that devises wicked plans,
feet that hurry to run to evil,
a lying witness who testifies falsely,
and one who sows discord
in a family.

[Proverbs 6:16-19]

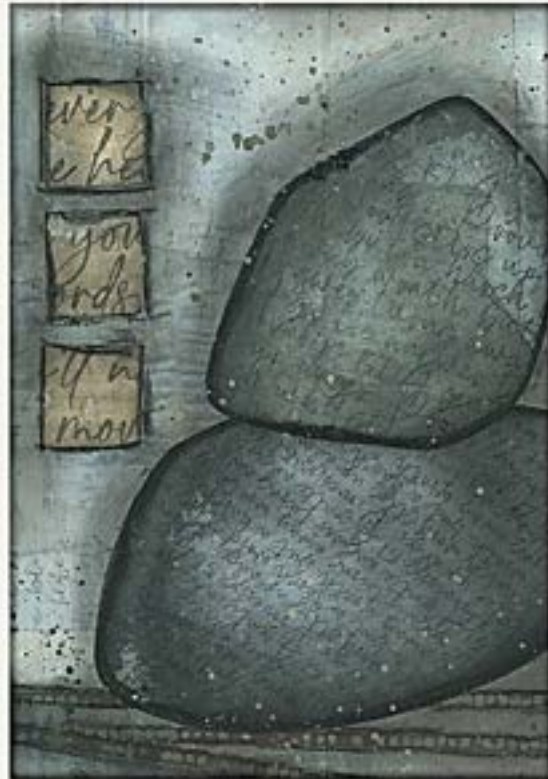


It is foolish to belittle another;
a person with good sense
remains silent.

[Proverbs 11:12]

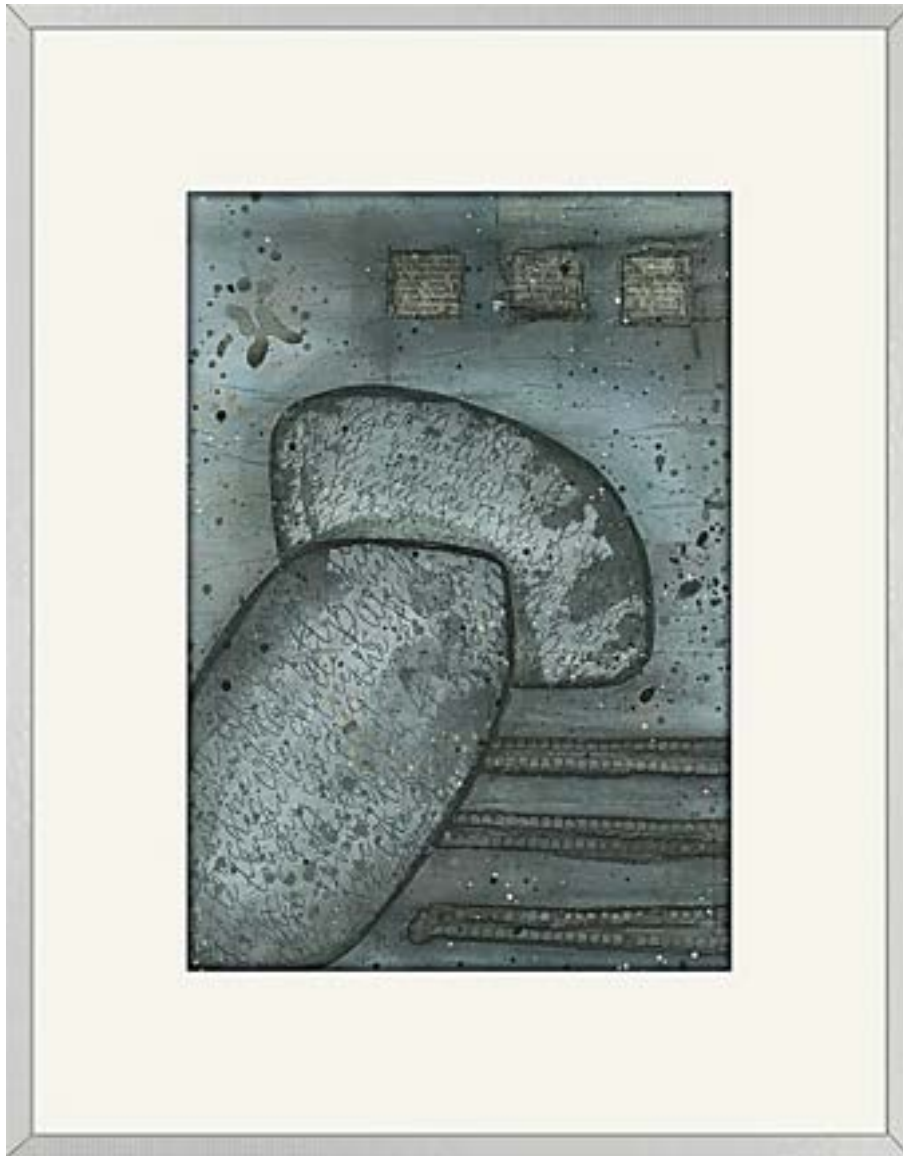


Those who are kind
reward themselves,
but the cruel
do themselves harm.
[Proverbs 11:17]



A gentle answer
turns away wrath,
but a harsh word
stirs up anger.

[Proverbs 15:1]



Gentle words
bring life and health.
[Proverbs 15:4]

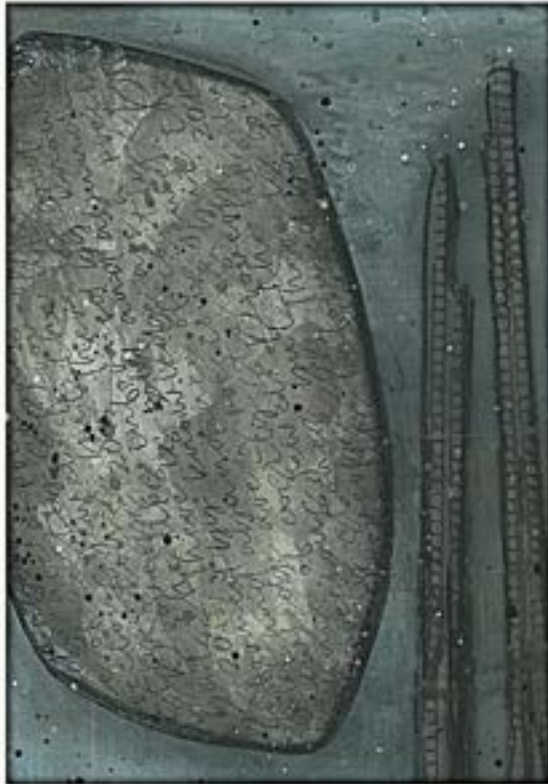


Pleasant words
are like honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul
and health to the body.
[Proverbs 16:24]



The words of the mouth
can be life-giving waters;
words of true wisdom
are as refreshing
as a bubbling brook.

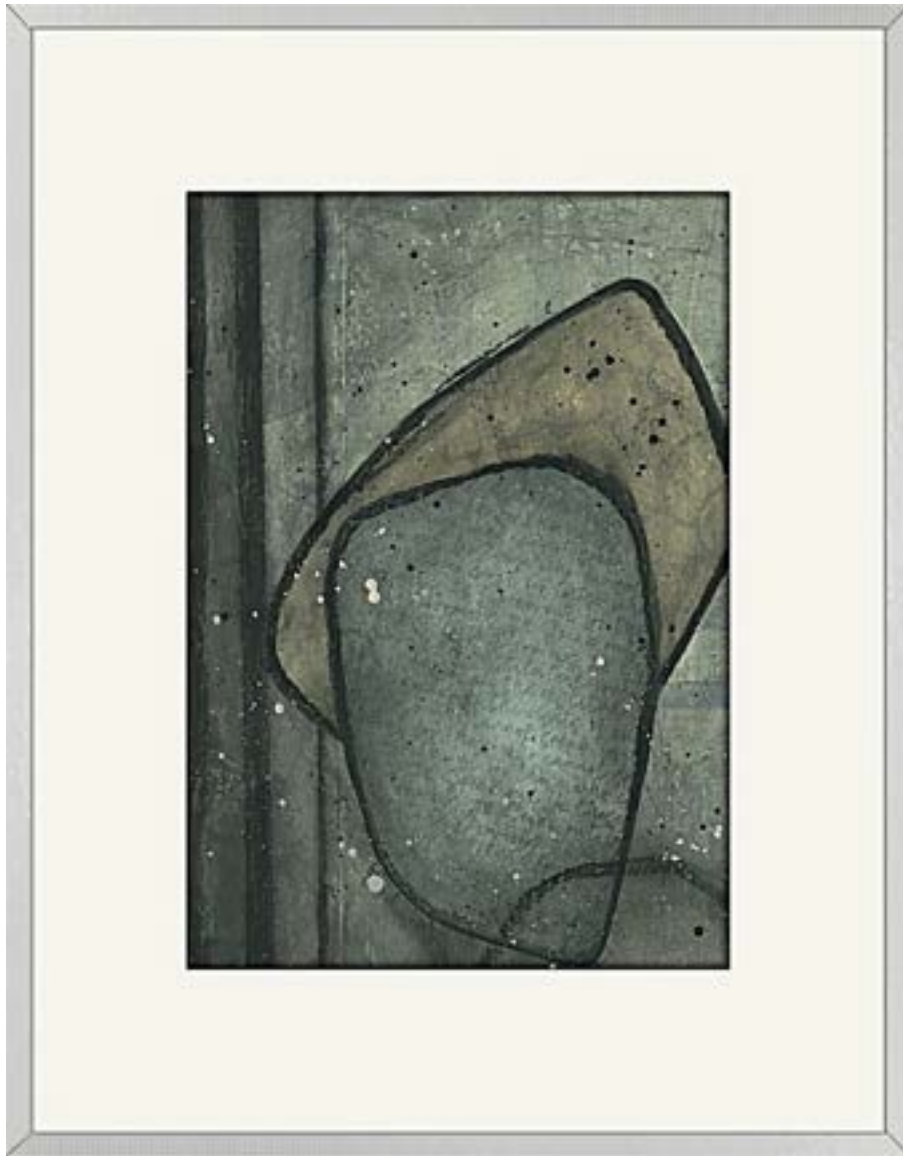
[Proverbs 18:4]



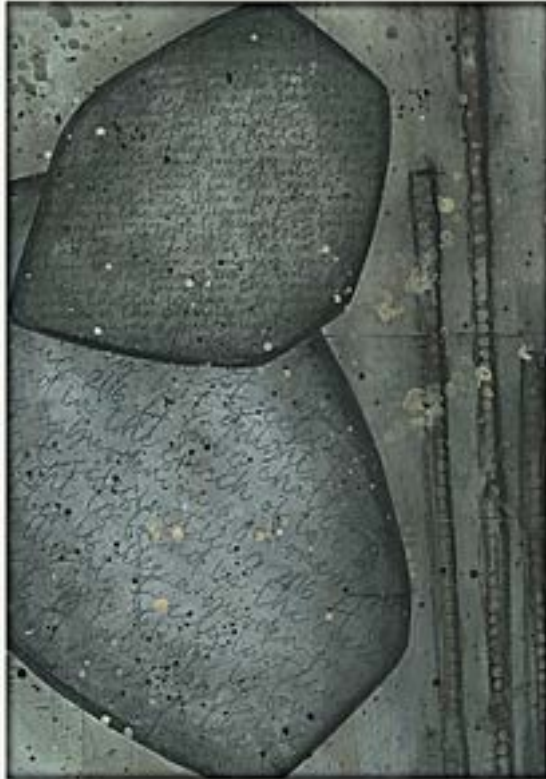
There is gold,
and abundance of costly stones;
but the lips informed by
knowledge are a precious jewel.
[Proverbs 20:15]



Like a war club,
a sword,
or a sharp arrow,
is one who
bears false witness
against a neighbor.
[Proverbs 25:18]



Speak out for those
who cannot speak.
[Proverbs 31:8]



A fool's chatter
is like a burdensome journey,
but delight is found
in the speech of the intelligent.
[Ecclesiastes 21:16]

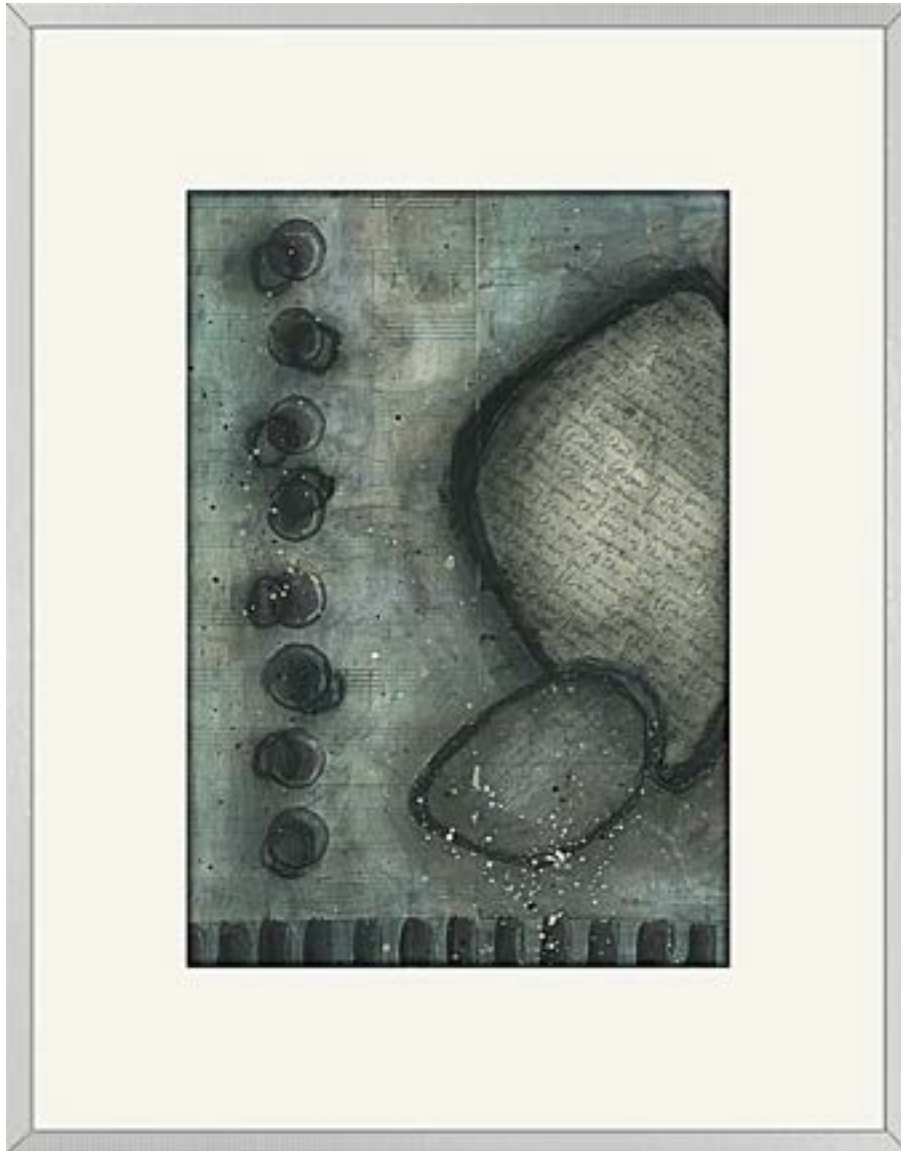


Curse the gossips
and the double-tongued,
for they destroy
the peace of many.

[Ecclesiastes 28:13]



The blow of a whip
raises a welt;
the blow of the tongue
crushes the bones.
[Ecclesiastes 28:17]



Beware then
of useless grumbling,
and keep your tongue
from slander;
because no secret word
is without result,
and a lying mouth
destroys the soul.

[Wisdom of Solomon 1:11]



If I speak in the tongues
of mortals and of angels,
but do not have love,
I am a noisy gong
or a clanging cymbal.
[1 Corinthians 13:1]



With this faith,
we will be able to hew
out of the mountain of despair
a stone of hope.

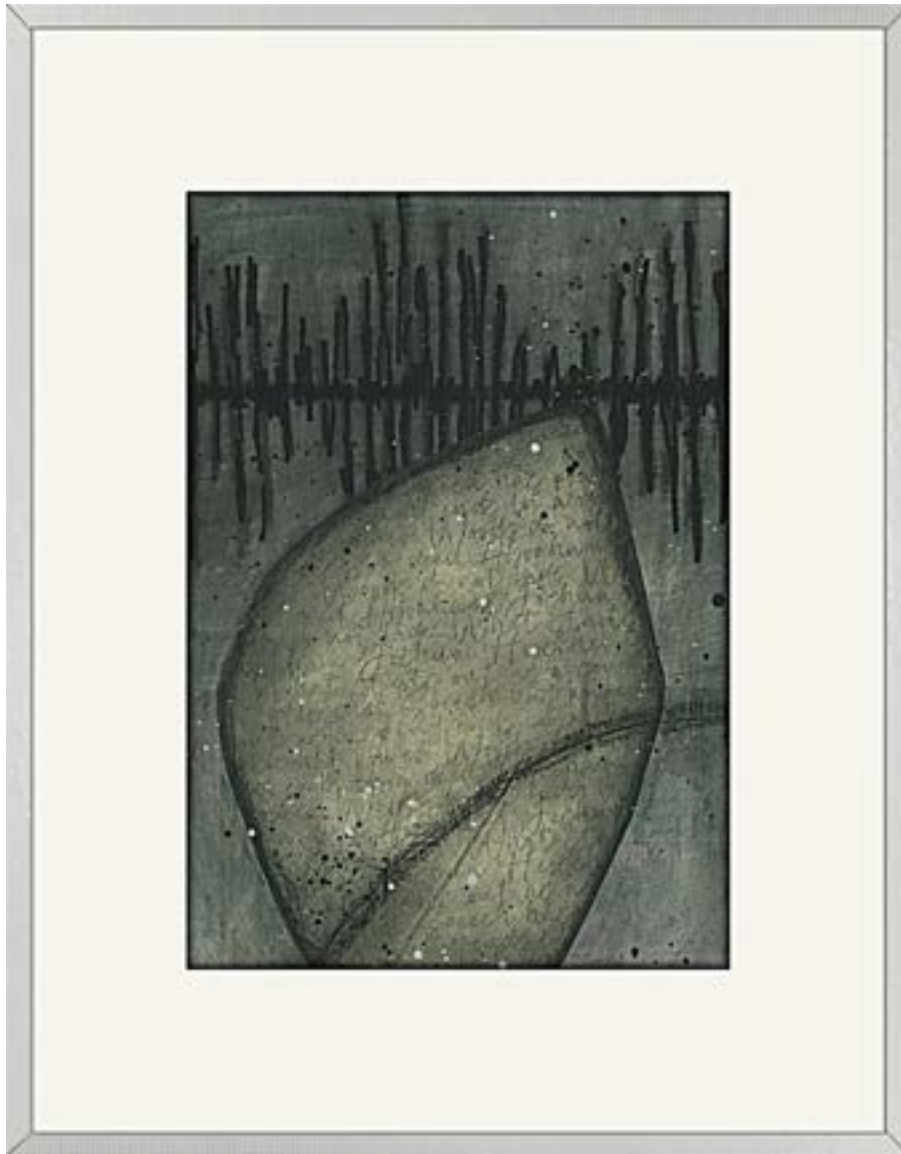
[Martin Luther King, Jr.]



Words are singularly
the most powerful force
available to humanity.
We can choose
to use this force constructively
with words of encouragement,
or destructively
using words of despair.
[Yehuda Berg]



Words –
so innocent and powerless
as they are standing
in a dictionary;
how potent for good and evil
they become
in the hands of one
who knows how
to combine them.
[Nathaniel Hawthorne]

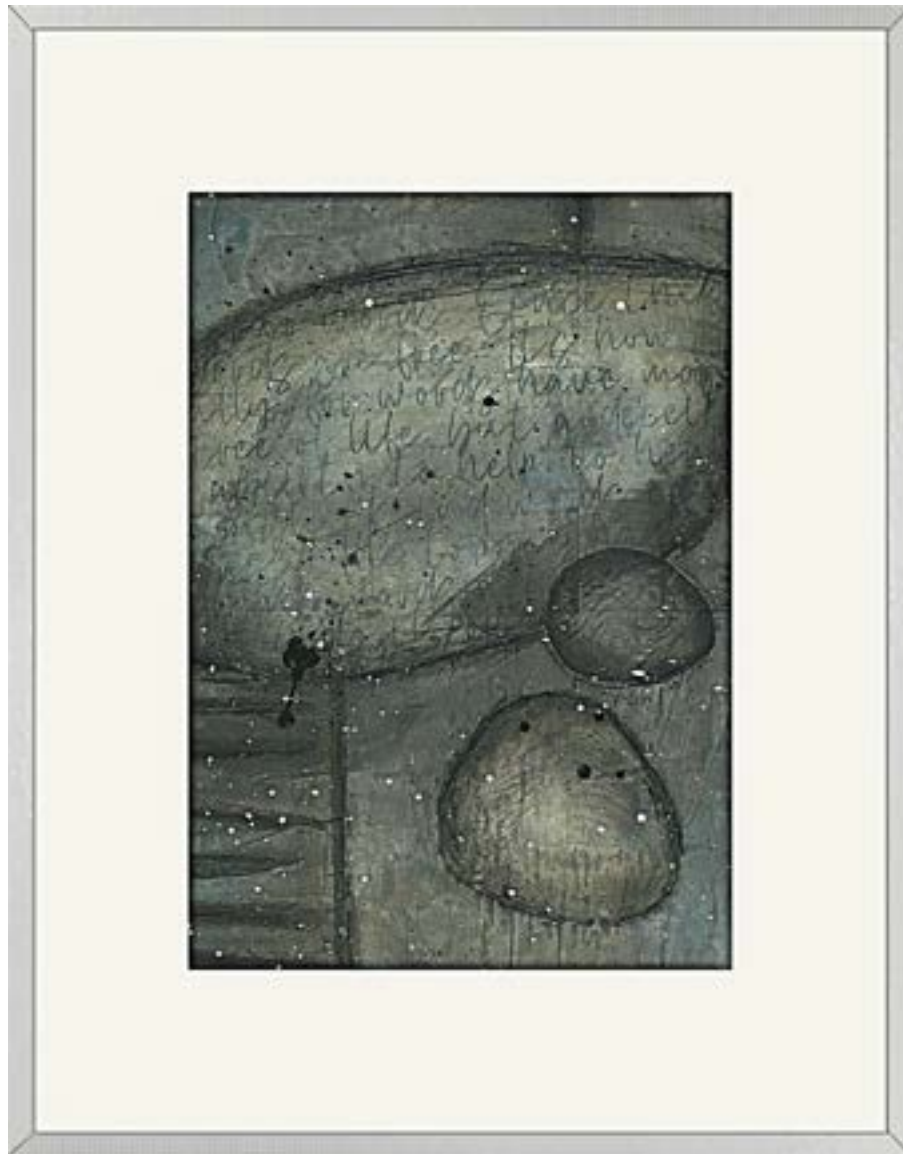


Speech has power.
Words do not fade.
What starts out as a sound,
ends in a deed.

[Abraham Joshua Herschel]



Be careful of the words you say;
keep them short and sweet.
You never know, from day to day,
which ones you'll have to eat.
[Anonymous]



Handle them carefully,
for words have more power
than atom bombs.

[Pearl Strachan Hurd]



Be silent
or let your words
be worth more than silence.
[Pythagoras]

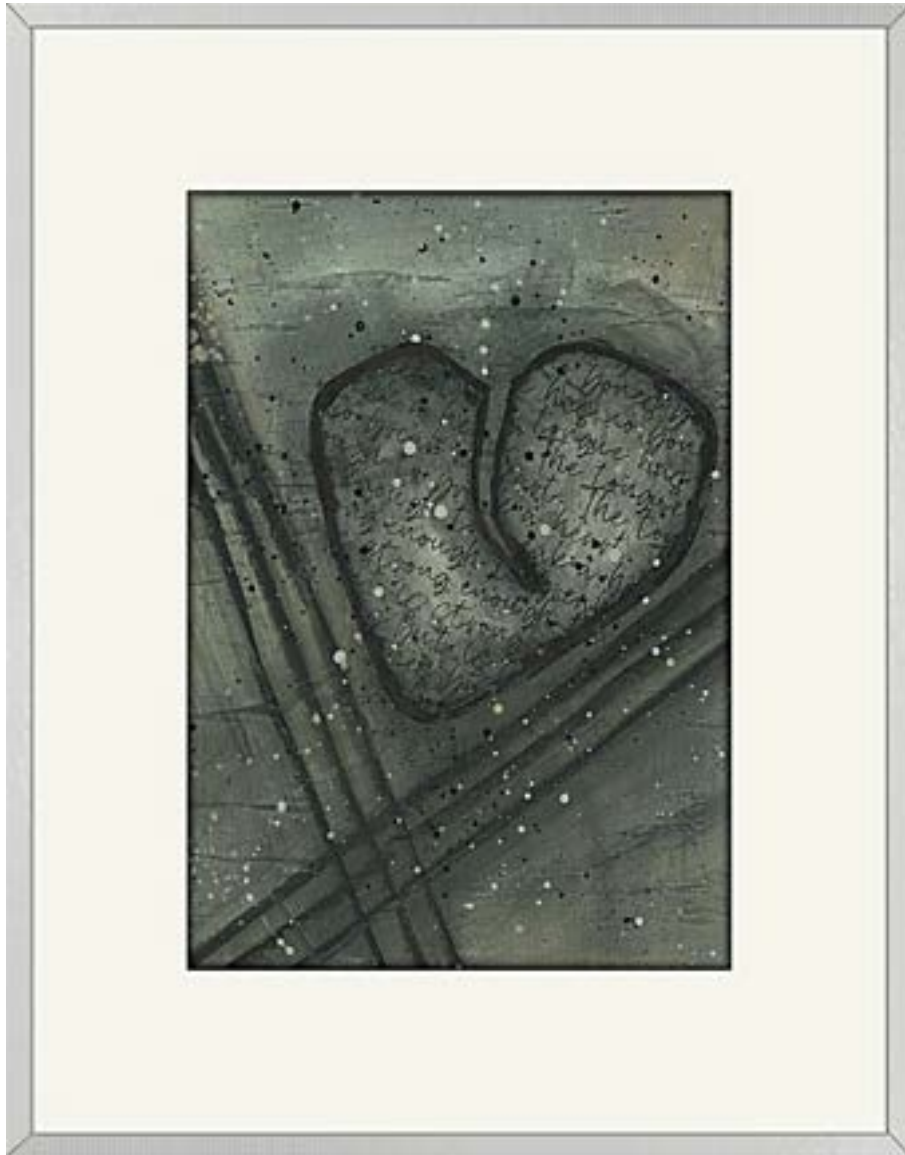


Kind words are a creative force,
a power that concurs
in the building up of all that is good,
and energy that showers
blessings upon the world.

[Lawrence G. Lovasik]



In a world of lies,
truth tellers often find
they are not believed.
[Rachel Wolchin]



The tongue has no bones,
but it is strong enough
to break a heart.

[Irina Swart]



Watch your thoughts,
they become your words;
watch your words,
they become your actions;
watch your actions,
they become your habits;
watch your habits,
they become your character;
watch your character,
it becomes your destiny.

[Lao Tzu]

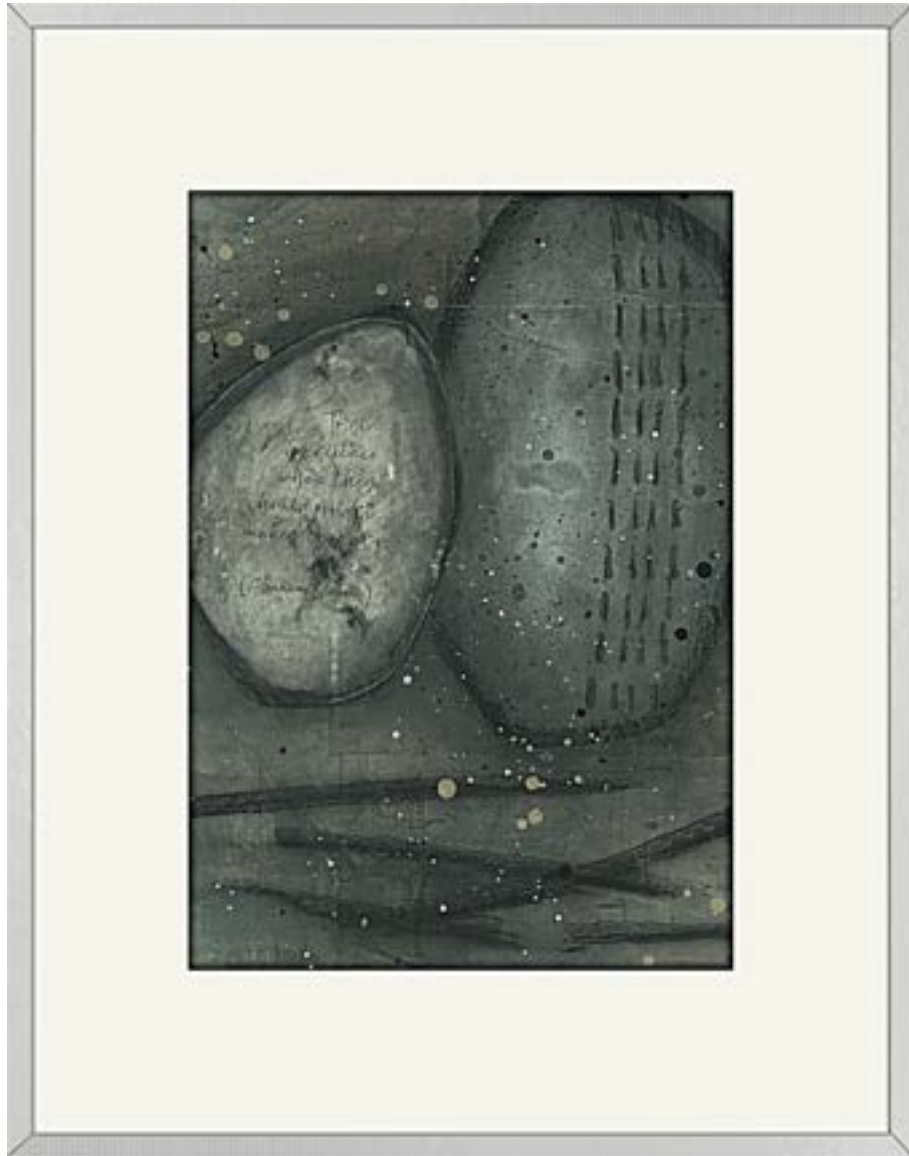


During the flames of controversy,
opinions, mass disputes,
conflict, and world news,
sometimes the most precious,
refreshing, peaceful words to hear
amidst all the chaos
are simply and humbly
"I don't know."

[Criss Jami]



Give sorrow words;
the grief that does not speak
knits up
the overwrought heart
and bids it break.
[William Shakespeare]



To sin by silence
when they should protest
makes cowards of men.
[Abraham Lincoln]



All our words
are but crumbs
that fall down
from the feast of our minds.
[Khalil Gibran]



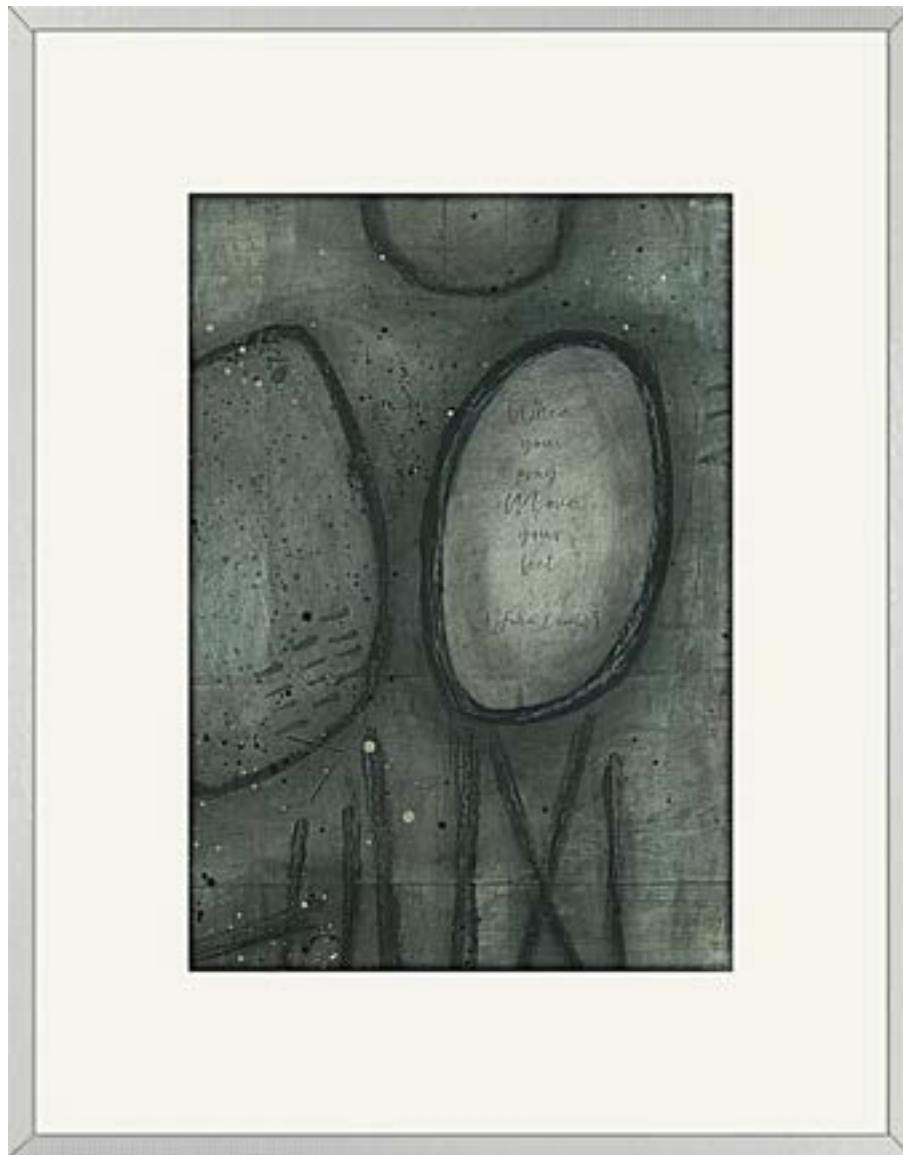
Colors fade,
temples crumble,
empires fall,
but wise words endure.
[Edward Thorndike]



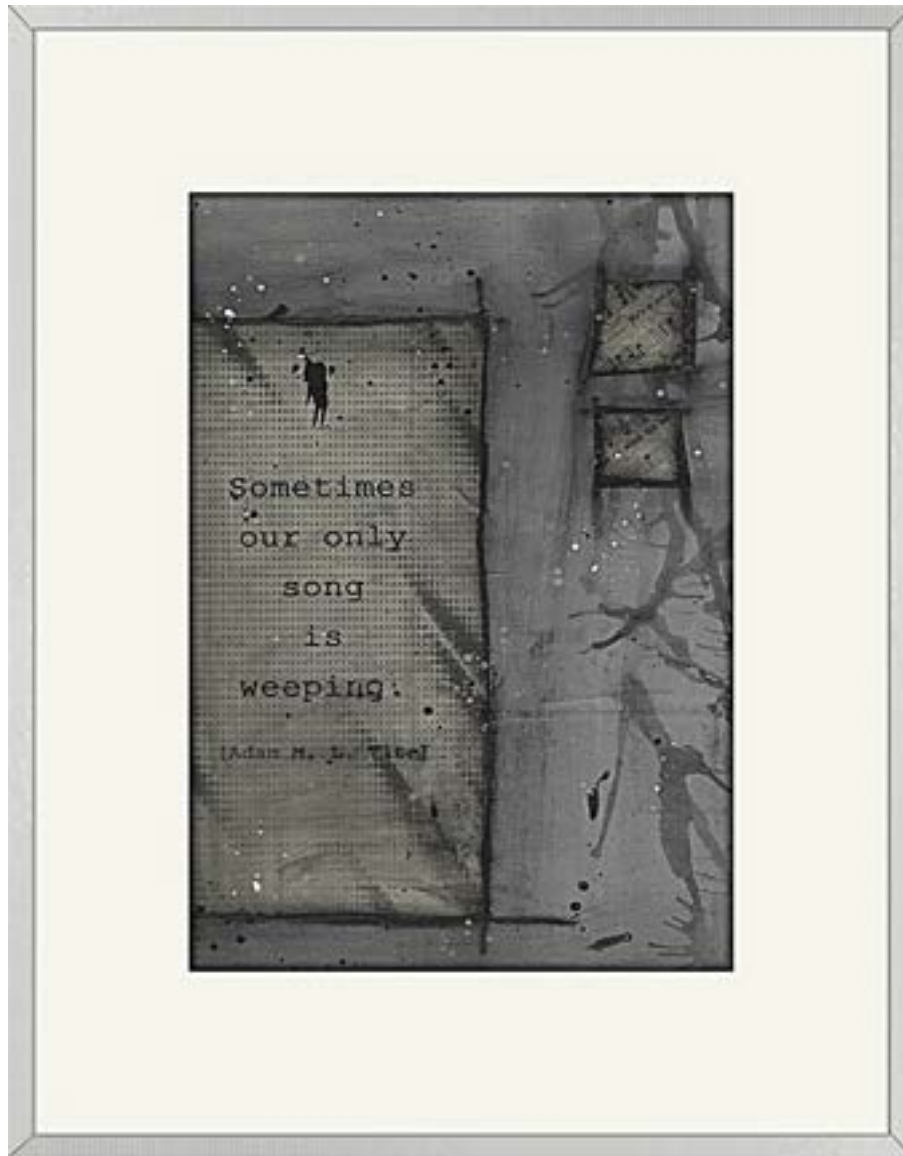
Racism is not just
a matter of it
not being polite
to say nigger in public.
[Barak Obama]



Words may show
man's wit,
but actions
show his meaning.
[Benjamin Franklin]



When you pray,
move with your feet.
[John Lewis]



Sometimes our only song is weeping;
our only sound is gasping breath.
Sometimes it seems that God is sleeping
while our brief lives are bound in death.
Who hears the song our sorrows swallow
and offers hope to calm our fears?
When all our words seem frail and hollow,
God heeds the prayers within our tears.

Sometimes we catch the faintest humming,
a far-off tune our hearts know well.
Sometimes we sense the Spirit coming.
Our song returns; our voices swell.
The Spirit sings though we are shaken,
and Christ has shared our heart-felt cries.
Restored, our weary souls awaken
to join God's song that never dies.

[Adam M. L. Tice]



There are times
when the world
is rearranging itself,
and at times like that,
the right words
can change the world.
[Orson Scott Card]



As we must account
for every idle word,
so must we account
for every idle silence.
[Benjamin Franklin]



Be mindful
when it comes to your words.
A string of some
that don't mean much to you
may stick with someone else
for a lifetime.

[Rachel Wolchin]

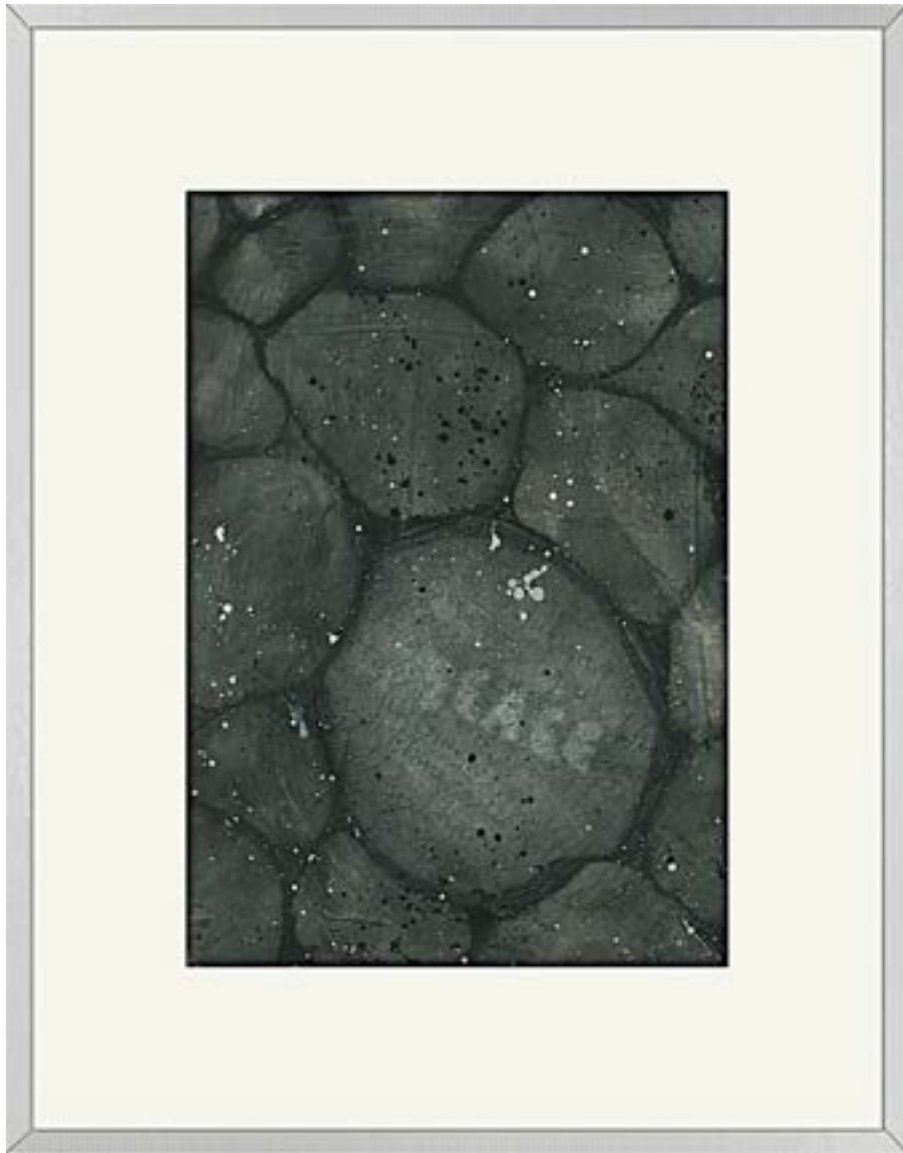


A broken bone can heal,
but the wound a word opens
can fester forever.

[Jessamyn West]



In the end,
we remember not
the words of our enemies
but the silence of our friends.
[Martin Luther King, Jr.]

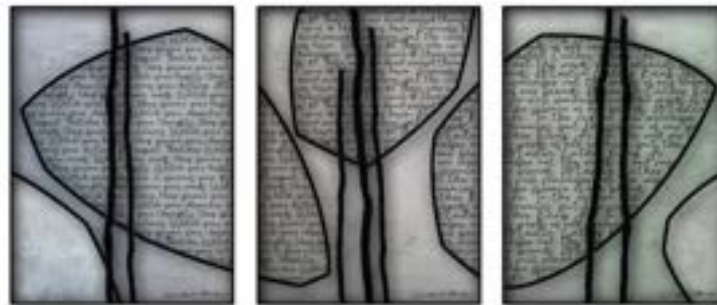


Better than
a thousand hollow words
is one word
that brings peace.
[Buddha]



With this faith,
we will be able to hew
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