

Pandemic  
Haiku

Gregg Bordowitz



Virus variant  
Becoming dominant strain  
Pasta for dinner

Food delivery  
Box left outside doorbell ring  
Privilege greets air

Therapist session  
Climate change catastrophe  
Pandemic spreading

Breath on cell phone glass  
Electronic devices  
Autumn cold alone

Cold air coffee date  
Smiley eyes social distance  
Warm brown stimulant

Candid as a nude  
Survivor amidst wreckage  
One lonely figure

Chewy candy drops  
Winter bare branches fig tree  
Leafless. Still, there's buds

I recognize this  
First the piano then horn  
Smoky atmosphere

Masks wet with hot breath  
Double layer cotton veils  
Whole mind feels muffled

Frying potatoes  
Mushrooms, tofu soaking oil  
Wait for heat to work

You'll sew and I'll mend  
We swap gripes like poker chips  
And angrily cope

My dry sinuses  
Cause irritating headaches  
For me and others

Bedside lamp on bright  
Snuggling under down blanket  
Together reading

A group together  
Each in their own rectangle  
Studying Torah

Fear the slightest drafts  
Old window insulation  
A wood-frame house tilts

Time to be alone  
To listen to my music  
No interruptions

Birds, insects, and fish  
Disappear from the planet  
We watch old movies

Writing without thought  
Pen to paper, shaky hand  
Snow melting off trees

Nature is beyond  
What's seen through steamy glass panes  
Sock feet on cold tiles

Fiery snowfall ash  
Cold and heat are similar  
Both can burn the flesh

Cold snowy lockdown  
Listening hard to stillness  
Distracted by thoughts

Second dose vaccine  
Arm stiffening, ache spreading  
Quick reaction time

Bodies heal themselves  
Drinking fluids. Taking naps  
And sometimes they die

Winter brevity  
What's left unsaid on corners  
Lest we freeze to death

The frontline workers  
Should get the support they need  
But rollout is slow

Viscous density  
Nightmare walking through water  
Airless gelatin

Black Lives Matter march  
Evenly spaced protesters  
Gathering safely

Walking, sad, near tears  
Can't fully comprehend this  
Accumulation

Dry heaves this morning  
Cold beads of sweaty fatigue  
Dozing on and off

Sum total of loss  
It's unquantifiable  
No way to measure

Electric grid fails  
Water contaminated  
People are freezing

Forgotten artists  
Empty museum hallways  
Neglected pictures

Eleven months in  
Virus variants appear  
Waiting for vaccines

COVID pandemic  
Repeats AIDS crisis problems  
Who owns the patents?

Herd immunity  
Conjures images of cows  
Chewing grass slowly

Worrying the sheet  
A dog's paws circle and dig  
Into bed mattress

When a poet dies  
City lights surge against dawn  
Just before sunrise

Greenland is melting  
Pollinators are dying  
Hellebore fighting

Terrible losses  
Each suffers grieving alone  
A void where he was

Winter becomes spring  
As a checkerboard pattern  
Rolled upon itself

Contact tracing list  
City Health Department texts  
Notifications

Two friends find lovers  
Pandemic times are lonely  
People find their ways

We're separated  
By vulnerability  
Into groups and waves

Passover seder  
Held on Zoom during COVID  
For the second year

Celebrate the dead  
Welcome them into the home  
Hold conversations

The fig leaves spiral  
Out of the knobby green twigs  
Surprised it survived

Long haulers suffer  
Fatigue confusion short breaths  
For several months

Anniversary  
Blossoms bursting amidst blight  
Soil alive with grubs

At the mountain's base  
Forever chemicals pool  
Pandemic planet

Nothing more thoughtful  
Than the daffodil turned down  
Pondering the soil

“Unseasonable”  
(As if seasons still exist)  
The plants hold secrets

**Pandemic Haiku**

Gregg Bordowitz

2021

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Gregg Bordowitz: I Wanna Be Well*, on view at MoMA PS1, May 13–October 11, 2021, and organized by Peter Eleey, former Chief Curator, with Josephine Graf, Assistant Curator.

*Gregg Bordowitz: I Wanna Be Well* originated at the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, curated by Stephanie Snyder, Anne and John Hauberg Director and Curator, on view August 30–October 21, 2018.

The exhibition was previously presented at the Art Institute of Chicago, April 4–July 14, 2019, co-organized by Robyn Farrell, Associate Curator, and Solveig Nelson, Visiting Curator. Special thanks to Ann Goldstein, Deputy Director, and Chair and Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art.

**Pandemic Haiku** is published by the Cooley Gallery, Reed College.

© Gregg Bordowitz, 2021

Design: Heather Watkins

Typeset in Questa Slab, from a family of typefaces collaboratively designed by Martin Majoor and Jos Buivenga.

**MoMA  
PS1**

**COOLEY**