*AMERICAN LETTERS: works on paper* rev. by Areli Alvarez

by Giovanni Singleton

Canarium Books

*AMERICAN LETTERS: works on paper*, by Giovanni Singleton, is a poetry collection that explores the world of art. Singleton has a BA from American University and an MFA from the New College of California, along with being the founding editor of *nocturnes (re)view of the literary arts*. This is his second poetry collection.

The crafting of this collection is one of a kind. Singleton uses numbers, images, shapes, scribbles, different calligraphy, different fonts and even equations to dictate and leave a lasting imprint on the reader. In a chapter titled ’illustrated equations,’ Singleton uses equations to try to physically illustrate racism in the United States. He demonstrates that black plus white doesn’t equal an emergence of the two but rather it equals a clear separation of the two “blk + white = blk AND white.” Another equation illustrates that America is not a single race, that although some races feel superior to others, we all make up one country: “White, African, Asian, Native, Pacific Islander, Alaska Native all times the square root of the American Flag.”

In the chapter titled ’be and being and been,’ Singleton uses 2-dimensional drawings of 3-dimensional figures to represent casings of people. Each figure has a different word making up the lines: feminist, working class, queer, etc. These lines are a representation of how our society forces people to identify and fit in one box or shape, different from others. And again, this physical illustration helps a reader understand and paint a clearer image of issues we are dealing with today. In another chapter, ’worldview(s),’ Singleton plays with repetition and different figures to demonstrate that not everyone’s epistemology is the same. One figure in particular represents a contradictory image with the words “The World Is Round” repetitively following one another to create a pyramid with one single phrase in the middle of it all: “, Ain’t it.” Instead of following a rational figure and having the object be a circle, Singleton does the opposite and places a pyramid to interrupt the social norm and commemorate divergence.

Whether you are a poetry enthusiast or just looking to pick up something strange, new, or just something alluring to look at, *AMERICAN LETTERS: works on paper* is the perfect fit. Singleton crafts each poem as a unique work of art and the variety of craft elements in this poetry collection make it so that there is a wide range for each reader to enjoy and choose from.