
To Conceive a World

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no more haunted houses,
stale-breathed walls,
no more
picking our way
around scabbled ruins, choked
by the hold of
generations
no more drawing at dry wells,
weaving whole cloth from
rags, brilliant
with their years and stories.

that's right—begin here,
with the awe of
a new imagination,
a life still dangerously fresh,
precariously pink
at the bone,
a peach skin split,
flesh free from
the stone,
juice drumming urgent
through your fingers.
begin with this.

Karen Mittelman teaches women's history and writes about women's politics and identity. She is the curator at the National Museum of American Jewish History, and has contributed poetry to Labyrinth and Artisan.