

Relinquishing

Mary Lythgoe Bradford

Tibetan monks descend on
the nation's capital
with healing in their saffron robes
and laughter in their chants.

In seven days they mold
a sand mandala of intricate
mosaics signifying the life
of the healing Buddha.

Crowds gather to watch
smiling gods destroy their art,
raking the sand into a bag
and praying the river to receive it.

Art collectors mourn the loss
as the monks explain:
"We live to consecrate the earth
and to relinquish it."

Like the monks, we live in the moment,
raking spirals across
the grains of the strand,
watching them vanish with the tide.

Singing into the wind,
teaching our children to walk away,
reciting love poems to the dead,
we pray to invisible gods.