

Interview with Amy Lynn Hess
by Megan Burns, *Solid Quarter*
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What made you want to start a literary magazine?

I was casually flipping through *Poet's Market* at the end of Naropa University's Summer Writing Program in 2006, and I realized there was a distinct lack of grassroots, easy-does-it, tactile, visceral, labor-of-love-type journals that were promoting the poetic conversation. It made me want to start a literary magazine to challenge the very corporate idea of what a literary magazine or journal really *is*. It is a place for current writers to share their own current ideas - glossy papers and perfect-bindings not required - just thoughtful and sparky writing that begets more thoughtful and sparky writing.

Where did the idea for a magazine in a brown bag originate from?

At its best, my work is blue collar and unpretentious. There's nothing more blue collar and unpretentious than a brown bag. The link between brown bags being symbolic of the type of work I appreciate and being a marvelously inexpensive way to mail the kind of work I wanted to collect came to me one night in Boulder as I was tossing around on a pull-out loveseat under a borrowed sheet and stolen quilt. I just couldn't calm my monkey-mind after that, and from there the mission statement emerged.

Why do you work with themes in your issues?

Various writers asked for themes last year as they were planning submissions, and I responded by adding specific subtitles to each issue this year. I think it has helped move the literary conversation forward. When all of the submitting writers are thinking along the same lines, I can edit a journal that moves as though a type of conversation. Writers also have the chance to respond to one another later in the season, in the "literary conversations" issue. It's very important to me to offer a space where writers can converse and respond to one another through fiction and nonfiction poetry and prose. I also think it has been a helpful way to guide my own writing as the year progresses.

Describe brown bag's eclectic mix of contributors and contents in four words.

Black dirt; rolling sweat-stains.