



Patricia Faith Polak

Art Is Not a Brassiere

Do not imagine art is designed to give gentle uplift and self-confidence. Art is not a brassiere. At least not in the English sense. But do not forget that brassiere is the French for life jacket.

—Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*

Into a quadrant of Manhattan Island,
a new immigration
narrow brickwork facades, trellised
with fire escapes
ago, seething with expectancy from
the shtetl
once, overwhelming with aspirations
from Magna Graecia
arrivé, chic boutiques, cafés that grind-
to-order beans for a cup of coffee
apotheoses, storefronts that housed fabric
dealers and zipper wholesalers
another outpost for the New York City
art scene: not the Lower East Side knish
rather, the LES's non-representational, indebted
to Kasimir Malevich and Derrida
paved over the echoes of pushcarts, polyglot

din
in a gallery, a Bulgarian who wasn't émigré
until the late Reaganite
is having an opening and speaks volubly
about the silences of his paintings

Patricia Faith Polak has published her work in *Poet Lore*, *The Lullwater Review* and elsewhere. Her poem "Absent War, Absent Conflict," on Picasso's painting *L'enfant au pigeon*, was read at the peace festival Spring Poetry Rain in Nicosia, Cyprus, in May 2012. She lives in New York.

Image: Lower East Side of New York City.