

What Happens on Page 76 in Four of This Season's Books

The artist Erwin Wurm envisions new releases by Mary Karr, Rebecca Makkai, James Wood and Tommy Orange.



“Me with Asthma” (2018), by Erwin Wurm. The artist says: “This picture, which is a kind of self-portrait, is called asthma, which I suffer from. The dirt from outside goes into the lungs but you cannot breathe it out, you can’t get rid of it. There’s a filthy feeling that fills you.”

Tropic of Squalor **Poems by Mary Karr**

If we every
single one of us (it would only work
if we all agreed) listened to our own
deaths growing inside us geologically
slow inching forward as the skull will someday edge through skin, then we would
each speak only the truest lines:
I've always loved you.

Karr's latest collection doesn't shy away from the end of things — she asks forgiveness from the ill-fated ant on her yoga mat, and reflects on the suicide of her friend and ex David Foster Wallace. In “Coda Toward the New New Covenant: Death Sentence,” quoted above, she reiterates that with the darkness comes moments of grace. (In this case the selected passage appears on page 75.) *Published by Harper on May 8.*



“Cucumber” (2018), by Erwin Wurm. The artist says: “It’s a cucumber going through, closing the ears. If we speak about believers, well, belief can be like a train through the brain. And, of course, it’s also me making fun of a specifically male part of the body and a specifically male

attitude that's shaped history not once, but many, many times." Courtesy Studio Erwin Wurm

The Great Believers **A novel by Rebecca Makkai**

He learned later that Charlie hated to swim, had been choking down chlorine just so he could run into Yale on the pool deck. They were already friends, but there was something different — even in the most innocent ways — about the intimacy of the locker room.

It's 1985, and AIDS is devastating Chicago's Boystown neighborhood. Yale watches helplessly as, one by one, his friends fall victim to the disease, while trying to maintain his relationship and his job at Northwestern's art gallery, which may be about to acquire a major collection. Decades later, Yale's friend Fiona searches Paris for her estranged daughter, finding fragments of her own buried past along the way. *To be published by Viking on June 19.*



“Untitled” (2018), by Erwin Wurm. The artist says: “These two kids — both are twisted and you don’t know which way to look at them. It’s reflecting this movement of children — jumping and falling — and a parent’s anxiousness. I know that anxiousness very well.” Courtesy Studio Erwin Wurm

Upstate **A novel by James Wood**

When they were small, the children would climb onto the lower branches, and jump off into that rouged carpet; the little kid-glove petals clung to their clothes when they stood up. Each time they jumped, even though he knew it was safe, even though he had been a thousand times more reckless when he was a boy ... he tensed himself, prepared for disaster.

Helen and Vanessa, Vanessa and Helen ... Alan Querry has spent a lifetime trying to understand his two very different daughters. When Vanessa’s boyfriend sends word that she’s in the midst of a depressive episode, the three family members — each with a specific take on the family history and what constitutes a life well lived — meet for a visit in Saratoga Springs. *Published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux on June 5.*



“Headless Asthma” (2018), by Erwin Wurm. The artist says: “What struck me was the role reversal, where you have a child concerned with what the adult is doing, when usually it’s the opposite. The figure has no head, is unthinking. Which to me is also what happens when you

watch TV — you lose your head.” Courtesy Studio Erwin Wurm

That’s true, that’s true, Mom, you could use some too, but do you hear me telling you that you need to stop smoking and drinking so much, that you should find healthy alternatives to passing out in front of the TV every night, especially given your job, I think even your title is substance abuse counselor. No. I don’t. Because it’s not helpful. Now can I go?

These loosely linked tales reveal a group of urban Native American people who take pride in their heritage while grappling with the long legacy of violence perpetrated against them. They all plan to attend an upcoming powwow in Oakland, Calif.— Dene Oxendene in the name of art-making, Jacquie Red Feather to make amends with her family. Tony Loneman, meanwhile, is going with a gun. *Published by Knopf on June 5.*

About the artist: Erwin Wurm works primarily in sculpture, performance and installation. He is based in Vienna and Limberg, Austria, and represented Austria at last year’s Venice Biennale. This summer, his “Hot Dog Bus,” a bloated vintage Volkswagen Microbus presented by the Public Art Fund, will be parked in Brooklyn Bridge Park and distribute free hot dogs.