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A Poem- Inspired by Alex Katz

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Alex Katz | American, b. 1927 | *Group Portrait 2*, c. 1950s | Oil on masonite | 30 x 36 in. | Promised Gift of the Artist | Colby College Museum of Art | 019.2004 | Art © Alex Katz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, N.Y.

Margaret Sargent '14

Family Portrait inspired by Alex Katz's *Group Portrait 2*

My grandmother loses her past
in pieces, like baby teeth,
waking in the morning to find
she's swallowed
her granddaughter's name,
her son's wedding,
her husband's funeral.

At breakfast, she leaves her license
embedded in a piece of melon,
and before bed, she spits
the front door key, bloodless,
into the sink.

But nothing grows into the gaps,
and she can only run her tongue
over soft gums and wonder
what's gone.

She calls me by her sister's name,
looks at my face and sees my mother's,
reaches tenderly for the hand
at the end of my arm.

And we all crowd in close,
surround her with a family
of thirty-two smiling
strangers.

Margaret Sargent '14 wrote this poem last year as an assignment in Introduction to Poetry. The project asked students to write ekphrastic poetry, work that collaborates with visual art, inspired by a piece of their own choosing in the Colby College Museum of Art. Audio of her recitation of the poem is online at colby.edu/mag. 