



Wilhelmina

by Kyle Potvin

Back home, behind some books: a portrait frame,
her painted face. None left to share a clue
to family history, her maiden name
is lost to me. She looks at me askew

as if to dare, “Know me.” Somehow I do
when I say her name. *Wil*, from William, but
feminine, whispering *desire*. *Helm*, too,
offers hints: protection, as in *helmet*.

Once, forehead lined as ancient text, she gave
me a ruby ring—too big for my hand.
In church, I’d watch the facets spark, feel brave,
gold band a shield. Perhaps that’s what she planned.

She is *Madonna* with her telling stare.
I say her single name for strength, a prayer.

Image: “Old” (acrylic on paper, 24x32cm, 2018) by Dominique Dève.
“Wilhelmina” was written by Kyle Potvin for *Rattle’s* Ekphrastic
Challenge, December 2020, and selected as the Artist’s Choice.

