

Artistic Details: Picture Poetry: "At 22nd and Penn"

Author/Photographer/Designer: Mark Pierzchala who claims the copyright through the business entity Bus Stop Poetry.

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There is an April and an August version of this work. The latter version updates the April version as the debt increased from \$39 trillion to \$40 trillion. It will be useful for you to have the artwork in hand as you read through the artistic decisions below.

April 2026 artistic decisions: There were several such decisions as follows.

1. The image of the full bus stop is necessary to establish the images of the side banners and the digital-number images.
2. I used the full bus stop image from 2023 because it was the best such picture I had. The label 'June 2023' became reinforcing for the overall art because it is another way of communicating the rapid increase in debt ('June 2023' with its value of \$31T is close to the label 'April 2026' with its value of \$39T).
3. I use '22nd and Penn' instead of 'Pennsylvania and 22nd' because it is easier to rhyme and just sounds and flows better. It is easier for Bus Stop to pronounce.
4. On the trend line, the size of side-banners images increases as the debt number gets larger. The pictures overlap to give a cascading effect.
5. The trend line overlies the side-banner images. It is the essential major element that directs the eye upward. The trend line pulls the entire work together.
6. The trend line is orange instead of red because it contrasts better with the blue.
7. The elongated rectangles of digital numbers overlay the trend line. This is evocative of hand bills that are sometimes pasted over other posters. The same can be said for the street sign.
8. The street signs '22 St NW', 'Pennsylvania Ave NW', and 'Evacuation Route' provide a nice context to the art and add authenticity.
9. Arrows connect elements and provide direction to the bottom-up poem.
10. The phrase 'AND GROWING' seen in the side-banners was just begging for a poem to emphasize this message. This yielded the bottom-up poem that was made bottom-up because that is how trees and bushes grow. Each line going up is one font size larger than line one below.
11. The work communicates about the rising national debt. The poetry is written to be somewhat clever, humorous, and rhyme to facilitate that communication.
12. The poem that starts with 'Concave up' has a concave left margin.

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13. The trend line covers up some of the side banners. But the only thing that changes in the side banners are the numbers that are still readable.
14. The individual poems are not titled. The work has one title.
15. The poems are a personification of the bus stop. For that reason, you see 'Bus Stop here.' With 'Bus' and 'Stop' being the first name and surname respectively. This is not the most elegant poetry in the world; for a bus stop it's pretty good.
16. White space must be filled if at all possible. Busy is good.
17. I decided not to use pictures with people in them.
18. I chose to specifically identify the Peter G. Peterson Foundation as the source of the bus stop messages with a small poem above their logo and website address.

August 2026 artistic decisions: The increase of the debt by \$1T and the capture of additional images that needed to be used caused issues with the placement of the \$40T side banner.

1. I chose not to eliminate any of the side-banner images from the April version.
2. This meant scrunching and further cropping of the side-banner images that make up the backbone of the fitted trend line. The August version thus adds an additional side banner.
3. This took much experimentation for placement of these images.
4. At the top, 'April 2026' was replaced by 'August 2026'. Just under that label, the per person image was updated to an image captured on August 30.
5. I changed 'Well, whatever' to 'Er, whatever' somewhere along the way. This was to provide additional internal rhyming.

Discussion: This is an example of timely poetry, not timeless poetry. Its value decreases as the days move on. However, it will always retain some value, if only in an 'I told you so' respect.

I doubt that I will update this again. This exercise has been wonderful for experimenting with *imagery poetry*, trying to fit poetry to images.

Legal Stuff: Please refer to the companion document *At 22nd and Penn Information - Final 20260416.pdf* for licensing and other legal information.