I woke up today and thought about the world. Its land: erupting, eroding, yielding, withholding. Its waters: warm and cold, salty and fresh, rapid and still. Its inhabitants: the very few I know, the few more I will meet, the billions of others. Its activity: creation and evolution, thrust and whirl. Things are happening all the time. And when terrible things happen, people behave terribly. When people behave terribly, terrible things happen. When terrible things happen, God behaves terribly. When God behaves terribly, it rains.

The unicorn is frolicking in the rain. When I say frolicking, of course it is understood that I mean fucking. The unicorn is fucking in the rain. Look at her. Look at her size. Look at the size of her horn. You know what they say about the size of one’s horn corresponding to the size of . . .

Do you know how much rain we got last year? Last decade?

When God brings on the flooding it isn’t with the dramatic fury you might expect. Fury is something that slowly builds; first it is fed and then it feeds. Momentum mounts consumption. It turns out, water is not so different from fire. They are sisters, playing dangerous games, getting carried away. They cannot help themselves.

Rolling over in bed, God says, “Build an ark.” For future generations to sing songs about, for children’s toys to be manufactured and sold, for the religious right’s favorite defense of heteronormativity. For the possibility of something to be salvaged, for a paperweight souvenir of the world that had been.

You know this part: they pair up. Check, check. Two, two. Two, two. Ladies and gentlemen, dogs and frogs, step right up. They comply. They obey. They board. Except for the unicorn.
It would be easier to comprehend if she hadn’t heard the call. To explain that she had strayed too far out of the town, into the surrounding mountains, an innocent Maria Von Trapp lost in song, miles from the convent. If the bell, then the siren, and the final, desperate, “All aboard!” had been too muted. Or if she had heard the call, only was coaxing a frightened kitten down from a perilous branch or helping a blind man navigate a busy intersection.

The other animals look upon the unicorn with disdain. The lions and antelopes bask in a sense of supremacy. The monkeys and penguins pat themselves on the back with an uneasy self-congratulatory glad-that-isn’t-me. The horses look out from the deck with envy, remembering what it feels like to run free on the mountain, now unsure of their future among so many that they cannot call friends. This rocking ship is one of safety, but by no means pleasantry—the cramped quarters, the smells, the pukes, the rules. The couples on board wonder what the unicorn does with her days, now in the rain and back in the time of dry earth and sun. Maybe this is the unicorn’s fault. Maybe she caused the rain to fall. Maybe she is too much. Too much thinking, too much fucking, too much dreaming, about things big and small.

This is what the animals think. Except for the dove, who circles gracefully above the unicorn’s head—but the dove doesn’t know how to be anything more than a symbol—a carrier of someone else’s meaning.

What did you do today?—I thought about the world. And about rain. I went for a walk that felt important. I made a quiche. I looked at myself in the mirror.

The unicorn knows early that it is too late. The boat boarded, the anchor lifted. The evacuation complete.

What does it feel like to be in the rising water? Do you swim? Float? Tread?

On day three she is hopeful. Maybe it will subside. But the rain is relentless. God is determined to share this hurt, this disappointment. The unicorn scales the mountain seeking higher ground, but knows it will never be enough. Every mountain has its peak and it is never enough. While the other animals plan their futures, the families they will create on their return to dry land, the unicorn prepares for her disappearance.

She summons the virgin maidens, but none are pure enough to answer the call. She feels the water rising on her body: her hoofs, her ankles, her knees, her belly, her back—all of the work of creation, all of its details, gone. The body is gone. The voice is gone. Even the scars are gone. She looks up to the limitless sky, the only thing untouched by this wrath.

Only the horn is now visible above the climbing water. She has taken her
Everything I've Got, Jess Dobkin, 2010.
Photo by David Hawe
final breath. Only the horn is now visible, and she conducts an orchestra using her horn as a baton. She cannot see it because her eyes are submerged, she cannot hear it because her ears are submerged, but there is the dove, following the horn’s tempo, performing a hollow song.

Life will carry on, but it will be different. They will live with the burden of history, now folklore. The, “I remember when it cost fifty cents to ride the subway. I remember how those horned creatures would frolic on the mountain. It was before your time.” BF. Before flood. BFF. Before forgetting the flood. BFFF. Before forgetting to forget the flood. BFFFF. Before forgetting to forget to forget the flood.

God makes mistakes. God has regrets. We make mistakes. We have regrets. Without them, what would we sing about? What would we create if not a testament to our destruction? A title. An idea. An essence. What is it worth? Ask the unicorn, she has an answer.