

# Elizabeth Shanahan

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Portami al Duomo translates to "Take me Home." If you've ever been to Italy, you may recall visiting a church that was known as *il Duomo* to the locals. As well as its literal translation of *home*, Italians use the word *Duomo* to refer to their local cathedrals. A Florentine friend once explained to me that the *Duomo* is the home of the people's hearts.

The Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina are that home of the heart for me. My parents moved there before I was born, and although I've lived in the Winston Salem area for years, they're still the place where, as the blue ridge first rises in front of me when I drive west on I-40, my lungs expand involuntarily and my mind rests for a moment. They aren't the home I chose, but the home that was built into me.

My blood ancestors were (as far as I know) European, and I was the first person in my family to be raised in the south. For centuries before anyone of my blood even considered Appalachia, Native Americans and foreign settlers have resolutely carved a place for themselves there against wind, and rain, and cold, and gravity itself. Those people have nothing to do with me, genetically speaking, but I believe that the land beneath our feet connects us more than I will ever be linked to people in countries I'll probably never live in. Their blood and bones are entangled in the deep roots of the mountains, and with mine, with my daughter through me.

Portami al Duomo consists of paintings ranging in size from 4"x4" to 4'x5'. The canvas is cut and stitched in several places, with fabric and fibers knotted and entangled into the living fabric of the pieces themselves. The color schemes draw both on the natural colors found in the Appalachian Mountains and on the glazes of historical pots I grew up seeing in local museums, made by Native Americans and latter settlers of the area. The mess of thread and paint and fabric, to me, speak of the complicated relationships between families, people, and place.