

An abstract painting with a warm, textured background. The colors range from light yellow and orange to deep reds and browns. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall mood is serene and artistic.

5

*Poems
and
Paintings*

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Look Here

Here is where I live
Here in the furl of poppy
Spill of blossom Orange Jasmine
Brush of lavender and sage
Sprout of legume

Right here among petals and twigs
Nested, like a sparrow

Here is where I live
Here in the bending grasses
Gnarled trunks of apple wood
Mossy bark and budding branches
Hard dark seed

Spring flowering to fruit ripening
In August, marking seasons

Here is where I live
Here in the stone creek
Cool rush of water
Steep rise of earth
Decline of expectations

Don't knock on that door
Look here
In the leaf fallen near your foot
Here is where I live
Look here



In Time

Fifty years ago I was new born
Nothing was asked of me
Everything was given
In time I could sleep
through the night
tie my own shoes
recite a poem
bake a cake
travel alone
The list
goes
on

Yesterday I was fifty
Everything is asked
Not all is forgiven
I scale mountains
paint poems
swallow pills
make beds
bake cakes
tie shoes
I don't
sleep
well

In a century a life vanishes
The balled heart lets go
things unforgiven
Shoes remain
soiled beds
cake pans
paintings
poems
In
time
sleep
washes
the newborn



For the Orchard

I want to tell you about the apple orchard.
How in the spring, when I come up over the rise,
blossom clouds soften the sky with a whisper.
How on summer afternoons I swim carelessly
through green shade and shards of light.
How autumn fills me ripe with desire,
and I devour stolen fruit as I walk.
How the winter horizon is sharpened at night
with unadorned branches pinned to stars.

This April day I'll tell you
how I drew the trees as they lay felled.
Trunks, connected or not by shred of bark,
lay on stumps ridged by saw tooth.
Limbs capsized into impossible tangles
laced with the season's new growth.

Here and there, among the terrible beauty,
I witnessed, first and last, the blossoming.



Van Gogh and Gone

Look!

Mountains lie heaped in folds of brown
threaded with shining rivers
We speed in a silver capsule sealed above
as white light swallows landscape
For some minutes, we are suspended in clouds
Then the pilot says, "All cleared for landing"
A toddler asks his mother
"How do we get out?"

Look again!

A poor artist's hand
grasped fields and sky by the throat
and flung them onto canvas
howling their yellows and blues
long ago
(They still breathe)

In the museum, we crowd the paintings and ask
"How do we get in?"
We would spend a day, a year, a life painting —
if only we had time
We linger in front of wheat fields and crows,
listening for the artist's final tragic gasp

Returning home, we press our faces against the airplane glass
wishing to feel the pulse of the smooth green sea below
Its skin peeled by the thumbnail wake of a single tiny boat
Wishing to hear grass rustling, wings flapping, trees moaning
Wanting days to stretch out from morning to night,
the sun our clock, paint as our companion
Maybe tomorrow, next week, when things slow down

"Now we're chasing wind," the pilot says
"We're making good time"



On Hearing a Poem Recited, Not Read

The poem flew at me
Little darts, pricking my skin
piercing my belly, my arms, my eyes
Flew at me on swift, black wings
trailing a smoky blur past my ears
Flew all around me
furious, then curiously quiet
No words sounded like words
read from a page
They had been lifted
the night before, years before
Flipped up, one by one
letter by letter let fall
on the tongue and dissolved
like melting snowflakes trickling down
through the heart, into the belly
to the toes, the fingertips
Pulled back through the blood
through the brain
down into the back of the throat
into the cheeks and spit out
Little darts of words
big wings of words
charging the air all around me
There were no words, only language
Tongue moved by muscle and blood
The poem entered me and exited
leaving little points of pain and light
soft feathery strokes on my skin and hair
Leaving me empty of words

Paintings

Cover

Refuge

42" x 36" oil on canvas, 1994, private collection

1

Split

42" x 36" oil on canvas, 1994, private collection

2

Baby Lake Tree

24" x 54" oil on canvas triptych, 1985, private collection

3

Orchard Burn

30" x 40" charcoal on paper, 2000

4

Distance

42" x 72" oil on canvas, 2000

5

Tarry

Detail, 42" x 36" oil on canvas, 1998