

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/1

Diana Der Hovanessian

Museum in Seville: a notebook

On the day Neruda died, I was in Spain
walking into the museum when
the newspaper headlines stopped me.

Then walking along the walls of
paintings in a daze I took notes
to give me something to do,
someone to talk to, through tears.

Portraits : by Leal

Dark heads, portraits, yes, but painted as if they were severed
and served on plates to surprise the sitter, when the painting is
viewed after the painter's death.

Birds by Pablo de Vos:
(aves acuaticas y una zorra)

Water birds, red legged, black winged
straddle halfway between stork and heron.
One dangles a half dead snake in his beak.
The other holds a phallic shaped bone
to taunt the red-eyed zorra.

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Flowers

by Margarita Caffi siglo XVII

White hyacinths were all
you had the eye to paint, lady.
Other sisters who could have drawn
tragic portraits were not granted time

Portrait of a Young Lady

by Ignazio Zuleaga

Brillo hair and proud of it
as if it were an accomplishment.
Or does that smirk just mean
you were well betrothed?

Christ by Zurbaron

(unlike Zurbaron's masterpiece this
Christ has no eyes)

His feet sink solidly into the pedestal.
He does not hang. His arms lift up
to be nailed into a gray benediction.
No eyes. No lids. Shadows only.
Christ's face waited for eyes while
Zurbaron learned how to see.

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Child with Puppets by Antonio Esquel

The woman you are to be
has grown and died
but there she is forecast
on your childish face
with earrings and spit-curved stance
gripping a puppet on a stick,
bells hanging like loose
silver rings. The doll has no eyes.
Yours open wide.

Gitanos by Jose Rodrigues Acosta, 1908

Gypsies.
I saw them yesterday.
They never change
the tasseled scarf,
the rose
that may be silk
in her hair,
the rippled skirt
that holds the nervous floor,
the sturdy shoes
to spit bullets
past your ears.
Gypsies knew,
they know
their style.
They show me how
to hold my head
when leaving art
that is not mine,
when losing poets
who are not mine.