

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Martin Willitts Jr

Vase of Peonies and Roses

Based on the Van Gogh painting, 1886

*"With much energy, with a sincere personal feeling of colour in nature I would say an artist can get on here notwithstanding the many observations"
--- letter, #459, 1886*

I feel so alone, so on my own. The sun ignores me.
I wonder --- will I ever be a part of this uneven world,
hearing a kind word speaking unrequited love.

*The roses say, Vincent, you are not alone, you are not alone.
When the night grows old and moon goes back
lighting the way to yesterday, things will not be so grey.*

From the compact formation of flowers, there is a commandment,
*love me and I will love you back. I will love you back,
surely as air removes its grey coat and trees collapse, I will love back.*

From the entanglement of stems, from the silhouettes of sunlight,
comes the determination, *we shall not let go, we shall not let go.
When all else fails and the world goes dead, we shall not let go.*

I need to translate these words into something everyone will know,
the only way I know --- with tongues of paint and ears of flame,
interpreting from my heart of pain, the joys of love unrestrained,

the froth of pink, the tubes of green, the white-cream petals,
the disappearance into the terrain falling into a fierce love,
a release of deep-reds, a star-burst of rapture, god-like, with love.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Blossoming Pear Tree

Based on a Van Gogh's painting, 1888

"Every day is a good day now" --- Letter # 476

I risk everything to paint.
A fierce wind materialized from nothing;
it could have taken me with it.

An affect I had never seen before was visible.
The sun was knocked senseless.
Light sparkled on light.

I had to paint quickly as it appeared in intervals,
each time bringing its own letters
with news I have never heard before.

There was yellow in the whiteness.
There was blue and lilac in between broken clouds.
Things were about to improve.

I feel much better in this climate.
Look what it brought for me --- things to paint ---
in desperation of storm and clearness.

The violet ground and wall with straight poplars
harmonize with blackbirds nowhere in sight.
And in the silence, just for me, is a yellow butterfly.

In a corner of this bringing of light
is a garden of yellow reeds, sharp green bushes,
a beginning flower bed near a forgotten pink house.

I will always remember this, just like someday,
I hope somebody remembers me

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

in the yellow light of clearing days.

There is more reason to want to live forever ---
to paint this calling of color into our lives ---
that I want to linger as paint, forever, plus one day.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Pink Roses

Based on the painting by Van Gogh, 1890

"I have seen very few roses here, though there are some, among them the big red roses called Rose de Provence" --- letter #488, 1888

There is a scarcity of roses ---
a surprising absence is calling out for paint.
Where are the lush gardens of Paris when one needs love?

My green bowl has pink roses spilling over the edge
as waterfalls of roses.

Dr. Gachet might ask if I have imagined them
from his personal gardens, but I am not telling.
A secret is always thorny as a rose.

My ears should have been providential roses.

Ask five questions:
Is this a legitimate request?
What steps do you use to correct this situation?
What would you do?
How do you borrow life?
Where do I sign the page before going into final print?

I would ask and expect no good answers.
I would wait for the nothingness that should follow.
Anyone knowing these answers is not worth listening to.

Listen instead to the roses.

Their petals rustle softly as petticoats climbing stairs.
They take their secrets to places I will never visit.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Madness ---

I will tell you about madness.

Madness is the lack of roses.

There would be less madness if there were more roses.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/3

Love and Irises

Based on the painting Irises by Van Gogh, 1889

Love is the blue skirts of irises,
as they wave to someone else ---

How can you stop Love? And, why?
Why would you want to?

I cannot stop love--- if I did,
what would become of me?

How can I finish what I began,
completely? Where are the Irises of Love?

And I pray, I beseech, I toss my loss
into the fragile air, like a straw hat

into the unknown Iris stars,
I need more time.