

# **A Sunday Afternoon on the Isle of Museum**

(after Seurat's "A Sunday on La Grande Jatte")

By

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## 1. prologue

I climb up & down the stairs,  
go over a bridge & through tunnels  
in order to join the crowd  
on the Isle of Museum.

I bid "Adieu" to the floating clouds  
to keep my stability in shape  
in the familiar shade.

## 2. premonitions & omens

A badly painted portrait of "Papal"  
leaning against a lamppost  
catches my unguarded eyes  
as I cross the street.

Soon after,  
I am in the subway car,  
breathing the same air  
with a young dark eyed Latin priest.

His compressed (com)passion  
with Mediterranean accents  
in proper attire  
convey an intense Eros  
to no one.

In a silent fancy,  
I return my intentional disregard  
to his unaware body intelligence.

Before I know it,  
I'll be in Caravaggio's town.

3.

Flirting, fluttering,  
in a polka dot skirt,  
I roam around on the Isle of Museum  
bright with ripples  
of waves & wavelets  
of summer.

4.

I make a bet  
on my motivated will  
& intuitive nonchalance.

& neither win.

I, lovingly, luminously,  
follow the flow of the crowd,  
happily, being a part of it.

## 5. Drawings

- I grew up  
with the tone, hue & hush  
of this room. A slightly bouncing  
carpeted floor, a wooden door  
& fused light -

Touched by an artist's hand/soul  
smokestacks stand  
in the same manner  
female nudes calm  
their inherited chatty-ness to nought  
under a sculptor's encroaching gaze.

On a southern island  
or a rock bottom island of commerce,  
a nude is essentially wordless  
whether in shorts, a skirt, in a shirt with logos  
with a backpack on.

## 6. August

a)

Another August  
another summer  
(passing).

A coal heaver,  
a student of philosophy,  
a painter's daughter,  
road construction workers  
or even a pharmacist,

People

without failing  
never change.

They stare back  
at the impersonal demand  
of the camera's eye.

In their focused self-reliance,  
rich with visions & tastes,  
supported by their sturdy postures  
& well woven-fabrics,  
farmers stand like bourgeoisie.

*b) Work Types - physical & intellectual*

Shipyard workers  
& carpenters  
look less disheveled  
& tortured than  
a trio of revolutionaries.

County workers  
& a communist leader,  
they both look like  
schoolmasters  
with a hidden trait  
of oppressed sexuality.

Dark, stern & direct,  
a painter's eyes  
do not wait  
for a "go"  
from a cameraman.

Drunk  
in the realm  
of structural tonality  
& mathematics,  
composers proudly  
but sadly  
sit alone.

Living in a celluloid mirror,  
a moving wagon  
or on a gilded stage,  
actors, male or female,  
know how to stare  
into the void.

Naturally, businessmen & politicians  
hide the most & the worst of themselves  
under their well-tailored coats.

Secretary at the radio station  
in the 1930' is called  
a woman of intellectual & practical occupation.  
She sits in the most stable manner  
looking erotically androgynous.

The aristocrat  
sneaks his glances



like an arrogant  
but meek rat.  
He looks the stupidest.

The clergymen  
are uncertain  
of the points  
where they stand.

Gypsies & transients,  
I feel personally  
the closest to these traveling people  
& their open & dead-end melancholy.

The persecuted;  
a look of professorship  
unnoticed.

A blind miner & a blind soldier  
dig ditches together in timelessness

Idiots, the sick & the insane  
and matter,  
they are always treated  
as one bunch.

A death mask  
of a son of a son  
of a carpenter  
takes the longest breath  
looking thousands of years old.

Leaving all these variations  
on the same thematic portraits  
of people of the (20<sup>th</sup>) Century,  
an old farmer walks  
into dusk kinetically  
with 2 canes  
supporting his 2 legs.  
he looks back at us  
unknowingly.

## 7. In Rodin Room

A red-faced,  
fat unattractive,  
over the hill  
priest walks  
past me.

In the same costume,  
characteristic  
of role changes  
with such a vulgar intensity.

Dust, lust  
& a study for obsession  
brings a small torso  
of Iris into life.

Here, bronze, a metal  
solidifies itself  
into an evanescent euphoria  
of sparkling mineral  
darkness.

## 8. Rest: Monet Room

*a) water lilies*

I am not tired  
but I take a rest  
in your garden full  
of memories of  
exposed negatives  
& dark water.

Sky/clouds are the best thing  
of the day.

Always.

Always.

As a poet sings  
in every century.

*b) sunflowers & chrysanthemums*

I am not tired  
but I take a rest  
among the crowd  
for a while.

Women in floral patterns  
come in & out of my sight.

Women, we are lucky  
for not having to go through  
psychological complications  
when we wrap ourselves  
in flowers & colors.

*c) Komore-bi/Nature Morte*

Still life; apples & grapes  
on your table  
repeatedly tell  
the untold story  
of your daily routines.

## 9. Again in Rodin Room

The martyr  
lays down,  
her head, arms, legs,  
feet & all  
floating, unsupported,  
in the air  
with Adam on her left  
& Eve on her right.

Above them  
is a thinker,  
contemplating  
on the human condition  
& its course,  
unnoticed by  
the crowd of  
shorts, sandals & pants.

## 10. Painters of Reality

a)

Sleep walking  
in the dream reality,  
I bump into  
another reality  
avoiding the other.

Marble floors  
& gray-beige walls  
corner our unconcerned  
sense of beauty.

A head on a plate.  
A skull in an open hand.

I rejoice  
an unexpected reunion  
with a girl  
whom I met  
for the first time  
when she was 10 days old.

The idea of naturalism,  
to observe nature,  
can always be retained & reassured  
in your most personal reality.

b)

Fidelity to truth,        il vero.  
Emotions,        affetti.  
Motions of the mind,        moti mentali.

Blackberries.  
Cranberries.

In every century,  
in every region,

a man & a woman  
do their best to  
perfect their skill  
of burying themselves impersonally  
in a humble, but a dramatic  
juicy climax  
of the season.

So do artists  
when they study  
delicate botany anatomy.



c) *Bergamo: Devotional Art*

A man carries a cross  
among the crowd.  
We hear no roars, no howls, no chatters  
in this muted & resigned  
disconsolateness.

d) *shepherd with a flute*

I sit down among the crowd  
to let myself secretly be drawn  
to the dark blue shade  
of your gaze under the wide brimmed hat.

An intense sky  
around you  
intensifies its intensity itself  
more & more.  
It turns itself  
into a glass like  
transparency  
of hard liquidity.

You, alone, sit  
there, holding  
a flute in your hands.

Such a beautiful face,  
such a gentle slope  
of your shoulders & arms!  
& such clean sturdy  
working hands & fingers!

In your posing posture,  
silence is music,  
a melody that never reaches  
anyone, anywhere.

As clouds form  
ungraspable poetry of the day,  
so high up in the sky  
making human thoughts  
immensely dark,  
red sleeves sing  
your masculine elegance  
in a pure pre-operatic  
canto.

e) *Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi)*

A young man  
playing a concerto,  
a lute player,  
flowers,  
an open score  
& instruments.

It's a shame  
that I have to share  
you with hundreds  
of others.

In your eyes,  
exterior & interior  
of every organism  
manifest their realities  
in such a clean  
undaunted conviction.

Your grapes, your angel glance,  
your robes, your young boys' skin  
& their gaze.

What is hidden  
& what is exposed,  
all float out  
in the form  
of a small breath from Eros  
between 2 slightly  
untouched lips.

Light & shadow  
never sing  
different songs  
nor play unrelated notes.

In your room,  
dense with  
sacred secular  
concentration,  
I lose  
my ability  
to poeticize  
things.

f) *Unframed St. Matthew and the Angel*

Witnessing  
numerous nails  
& 400 years or more old  
woven fibers  
leaves me  
completely  
speechless.

The crowd  
weaves through  
the space around me  
in a casual humbleness.

A girl walks  
in front of me  
to face the mysterious meeting  
of an old vulgar man-saint  
& a young man-angel.

She breaks  
her own & my  
concentration,  
sneezing.

In this cloudless space,  
we all, one way or another,  
wrap ourselves  
in aesthetic details  
of woven cotton fabrics.

Secular  
or sacred,  
metamorphosis  
of material reality  
still amazes me.

*g) still life*

What we eat.  
What we grow.  
What we collect.  
What we harvest.  
What we decorate.  
What we put into a bowl,  
on a plate or in a basket.

An illusion  
of Nature Mort  
betrays itself  
vividly & vengefully  
to claim its life  
at the moment.

*b) The Supper at Emmaus: Tremendous Naturalezga (Tremendous Naturalism)*

After the resurrection,  
he casts a shadow  
in light.

The room  
is dark  
with a gray cloudy floor.

I see a cornered void  
of the scene  
together  
in amazement  
with 3 protagonists.

A basket of fruits  
meat on a plate,  
bread, wine & water,  
solid & unshakable,  
evidence of this  
tremendous reality  
tells the story  
of resurrected flesh.

What words  
are breathing out  
from your closed mouth?

Acclaiming his faith  
in the ability  
to express  
reality around him  
without stylistic structures,  
an artist  
wakes up  
to another reality  
shot suddenly  
by a dart of a closing call  
coming from  
nowhere.

## 11. Epilogue: to be continued

Like a receding tide,  
we leave the isle of Museum,  
climbing down the stone steps,  
to greet ourselves  
in the soda & pretzel sky.

Burying myself  
within a crowd of tremendous reality,  
I walk slower than usual  
just to adjust my lingering sense  
of melancholy & delight  
to the rhythm  
of an approaching dusk  
& to the hollow laughter  
of puppets & ventriloquists.

## **postscript**

These poems are written on Sunday, August 8, 2004  
at the visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (nyc),  
mainly to see two exhibitions, "Painters of Reality:  
The Legacy of Leonardo and Carravaggio in Lombardy"  
and "August Sanders: People of the 20th Century,  
A Photographic Portrait of Germany".